

'Wii-habilitation': Using video games to heal burns

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(PhysOrg.com) -- Video games, often regarded as mindless entertainment for lethargic children and teens, are proving to be an effective new tool to motivate patients to perform rehabilitation exercises.

Rehabilitation therapists from the William Randolph Hearst Burn Center at NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital/Weill Cornell Medical Center are using the motion-sensitive Nintendo Wii video game console, along with traditional methods, to help patients recover from life-changing injuries.

For burn and skin-graft patients, moving and stretching the skin is very painful but imperative for a successful recovery. To play the video games, patients use wireless remotes that control actions on a screen to simulate realistic motions, like swinging a tennis racquet or swatting a baseball.

The burn center is also using Guitar Hero III, a special add-on to the Nintendo Wii system whose controller looks like a miniature guitar. Patients strum a bar on the guitar's body and press color-coded buttons that resemble notes. Therapists hope the actions will help patients with burns on their hands, arms and shoulders regain fine-motor control.

Provided by Cornell University

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