

Shopping simulator leads to better therapy

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A virtual reality system that will enable occupational therapists at the Repatriation General Hospital to better assess stroke victims will be launched today by Minister for Ageing Jennifer Rankine.

The Shopping Simulator has been developed by the Medical Device Partnering Program (MDPP) at Flinders University in collaboration with the Department of Rehabilitation and Aged Care.

It allows patients to move through a virtual supermarket, selecting groceries and adding them to a trolley, to demonstrate whether they are capable of making logical decisions.

MDPP Director, Professor Karen Reynolds, said the focus on cognitive assessment through the simulator enables an OT to determine a patient's ability to undertake the everyday task of supermarket shopping.

“Our simulation software recreates the grocery shopping experience with the aid of a simple touch-screen computer and a ‘trolley handle’,” Professor Reynolds said.

“The level of complexity can be adjusted by OTs, who can specify certain groceries or set a shopping budget to ascertain the cognitive ability of each patient,” she said.

Associate Professor Craig Whitehead, Regional Clinical Director for Rehabilitation and Aged Care in the Southern Adelaide Health Service, said the Shopping Simulator was created in response to requests from

hospital clinicians.

“Clinicians need to know what people are capable of, rather than just have an opinion of what they are capable of,” Associate Professor Whitehead said.

“The Shopping Simulator is an effective and efficient way of testing a stroke patient’s alertness, ability to scan both sides of the environment and logical processing,” he said.

“Particularly for older people and people with disability, technological interfaces such as the Shopping Simulator represent the brave new frontier for clinical medicine.”

Minister for Ageing Jennifer Rankine said the State Government was proud to support research projects that have a real impact on people’s quality of life.

“The South Australian Government has provided more than \$1 million in funding to the Medical Device Partnering Program at Flinders University to help develop important research that assists South Australians in their everyday lives. I am pleased to see one of the significant projects funded through this program in action,” Minister Rankine said.

“Suffering from a stroke affects not only the patient but their family as well. The success seen in early trials of the simulator is encouraging and hopefully soon this project can be used to help better assess more people in this situation,” she said.

The [Medical Device](#) Partnering Program supports the development of cutting-edge medical devices and assistive technologies, through unique collaborations between researchers, industry, clinical end-users and

government.

Provided by Flinders University

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