

Virtual coach helps Parkinson's patients stick with exercise

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New research from Terry Ellis, assistant professor at Sargent College and Director of the Center for Neurorehabilitation, has found that a virtual exercise coach was effective in helping individuals with Parkinson's disease adhere to a daily walking regimen.

Twenty subjects with Parkinson's disease were instructed to interact with a virtual exercise coach, named "Tanya," on a tablet computer for five minutes, wear a pedometer and walk daily for one month. Retention rate, satisfaction, and virtual coach interaction history were assessed, and six-minute walk and gait speed were evaluated at baseline and after the intervention.

At the end of the month there was a 100 percent retention rate among participants and the average walking distance improved from 1,508 feet to 1,588 feet. Gait speed improved from 3.9 to 4.1 feet per second and maximum gait speed increased from 5.5 feet to 5.8 feet per second.

According to the research, virtual coaches have the ability to build social and [emotional relationships](#) and can help promote healthy behavioral changes in people with [chronic illnesses](#).

The study appears in the June issue of the *American Journal of Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation*. Listen to Prof.

More information: journals.lww.com/ajpmr/Abstract/FullText/2013/06000/Abstract_to_Promote.2.aspx

Provided by Boston University Medical Center

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