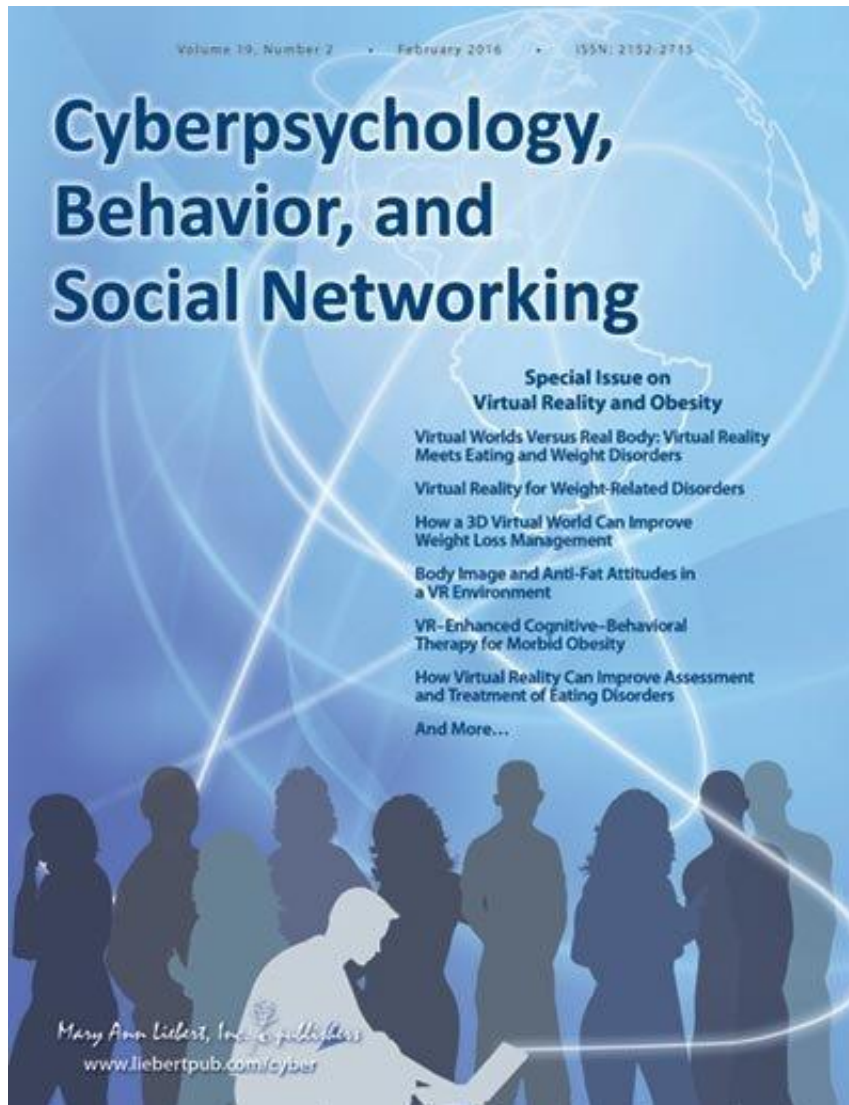


# Can virtual reality help fight obesity?

February 23 2016

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Credit: Mary Ann Liebert, Inc., publishers

Virtual reality offers promising new approaches to assessing and treating people with weight-related disorders, and early applications are revealing valuable information about body image. The advantages of virtual reality (VR) for evaluating body image disturbances and the potential to use VR to combat obesity are discussed in an article that is part of special issue on Virtual Reality and Obesity published in *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*.

Journal Editor-in-Chief Brenda K. Wiederhold, PhD, MBA, BCB, BCN, Interactive Media Institute (San Diego, CA) and Virtual Reality Medical Institute (Brussels, Belgium) and coauthors Giuseppe Riva, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore and Istituto Auxologico Italiano (Milan, Italy) and José Gutiérrez-Maldonado, University of Barcelona, Spain, describe studies that demonstrate how VR environments can produce responses similar to those seen in the real world in the article ["Virtual Reality in the Assessment and Treatment of Weight-Related Disorders"](#). The authors provide examples in which VR technology is used to determine how people perceive their bodies, to treat [body image](#) disturbances, and to improve adherence to physical activity among obese individuals.

The special issue features a broad range of articles highlighting many aspects of [virtual reality](#) and its potential applications. These include: ["Using Virtual Pets to Increase Fruit and Vegetable Consumption in Children: A Technology-Assisted Social Cognitive Theory Approach"](#), by Sun Joo (Grace) Ahn *et al.*; ["What Are You Thinking When You Look at Me?" A Pilot Study of the Use of Virtual Reality in Body Image](#)", by Victoria A. Mountford *et al.*; and ["Eating Disorders and Obesity in Virtual Reality: A Comprehensive Research Chart"](#), by Emily Lafond *et al.*

"Many chronic conditions are associated with a dysfunction of the stress system: obesity, metabolic syndrome, and type 2 diabetes; hypertension; anxiety, depression, and insomnia; and pain syndromes. I am

appreciative to the researchers and clinicians worldwide who are exploring innovative ways to utilize technology to provide more effective assessment and treatment methods to a greater number of individuals," says Dr. Wiederhold, PhD, MBA, BCB, BCN, Interactive Media Institute, San Diego, California and Virtual Reality Medical Institute, Brussels, Belgium.

**More information:** Brenda K. Wiederhold et al. Virtual Reality in the Assessment and Treatment of Weight-Related Disorders, *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking* (2016). [DOI: 10.1089/cyber.2016.0012](https://doi.org/10.1089/cyber.2016.0012)

Provided by Mary Ann Liebert, Inc

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