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Review: Virtual reality distracts from pain of medical procedures

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(HealthDay)—Virtual reality (VR) appears to be an effective distraction

intervention to relieve pain and distress during various medical procedures, according to a review published online Feb. 26 in *The Clinical Journal of Pain*.

Paola Indovina, Ph.D., from the Institute for High Performance Computing and Networking, ICAR-CNR, in Naples, Italy, and colleagues conducted a literature review of clinical trials to examine the utility of VR as a distraction intervention to alleviate pain and distress during different medical procedures. These included burn injury treatment, chemotherapy, surgery, dental treatments, and other diagnostic and therapeutic procedures.

The researchers found that VR was effective for reducing procedural pain, even in patients subjected to extremely painful procedures, such as those with burn injuries undergoing wound care and physical therapy. In different settings, including during chemotherapy, VR seemed to reduce cancer-related symptoms. Side effects were mild and infrequent.

"Despite these promising results, future long-term randomized controlled trials with larger sample sizes and evaluating not only self-report measures but also physiological variables are needed," the authors write. "Further studies are also required both to establish predictive factors to select patients who can benefit from VR distraction and to design hardware/software systems tailored to the specific needs of different patients and able to provide the greatest distraction at the lowest cost."

More information: Abstract/Full Text (subscription or payment may be required)

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