



## Utilizing VR in Skilled Therapy

Therapists are always looking for new methods to help patients achieve their therapeutic goals and with recent advancements in immersive technology, therapeutic virtual reality has become a standard technique in clinics worldwide.

VR utilizes advanced technologies to produce simulated, interactive, and multi-dimensional environments where patients can develop life skills, static and dynamic balance, trunk control, kinesthetic awareness, and much more. Instead of tedious and repetitive exercises, the patient can be involved in fun and challenging virtual reality experiences.

Using fine motor coordination and full-body movements, patients can manipulate objects in a virtual space to address deficits in sensation, motor planning, upper and lower extremity limb strength, center of gravity shifts, coordination, and range of motion; all in a way that is both purposeful and fun.

By using VR, exercises can be adapted, made more challenging or simpler depending on the patient's needs to address physical deficits, limb flexibility, reaction time and coordination all which can be beneficial in reducing falls. When patients are engaged in an interactive experience, they often forget they are in a skilled therapy session.

With its engaging, "game-like" qualities, VR can also benefit patients through cognitive functional intervention. Immersive technology is capable of replicating an environment, which allows the patient to be transported into a scenario without having to relocate. In this way, the patient gains improved perception, orientation, concentration functions, and a variety of other skills that promote emotional development, independence, and preparing for a successful discharge.

The virtual reality technology enables older adults to interact with the outside world in genuinely innovative ways that promote engagement, wellness, access, and above all, positive outcomes. As an adjunct to traditional therapy, virtual reality has the potential to have a positive impact on helping our patients reach their goals.