

Modern technology and psychological well-being: VR interventions for the treatment of anxiety in cancer patients

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Many stages of cancer treatment, as also the disease itself, can generate stress and anxiety for a lot of patients. According to the National Comprehensive Cancer Network 47% of cancer patient's suffers from anxiety. Although chemotherapy can be very effective and sometimes indispensable to treat cancer, a study showed that is directly correlated to depression. Another study showed that chemotherapy can cause anxiety and that anxiety is directly linked to coping strategies, with high anxiety levels leading to confrontation instead of problem solving strategies. Preoperative anxiety is commonly present in ambulatory surgery patients. Furthermore, the author demonstrated that patients with high levels of preoperative anxiety were more likely to experience physical discomfort and anxiety postoperatively. In 1997 in France, 20% of surgeries and 48% of anal tumor surgeries were done in ambulatory. The authors showed that these numbers were increasing each year. VR interventions were used in the past as a distraction to pain and anxiety. A systematic literature review of

controlled studies showed with solid evidence that VR is an effective and feasible distraction, especially for reducing pain. Moreover, studies have shown that VR interventions have positive benefits and they promote wellbeing, as well as decreasing negative emotional states. Similarly, other studies showed decreased anxiety (measured by SAI) and decreased symptom distress immediately following chemotherapy with VR intervention. Therefore, our project aims to treat preoperative and postoperative anxiety in ambulatory cancer surgeries, as well as in chemotherapy, with the help of technology trends and more precisely virtual reality.

Speaker Biography

Konstantina Sokratous has an Msc in Clinical Psychology and Psychopathology. The current research project is under evaluation for an intra- faculty funding, as well as for an external one for a phd. She has worked in Oncology services at the Gard's Cancer Institut in Nimes, France and she is currently focusing on the promotion of psychological well-being in cancer patients.

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