

# VIRTUAL REALITY AS A WAY TO REDUCE COERCIVE MEASURES IN THE PSYCHIATRIC FIELD

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## BACKGROUND

This poster is the product of an educational project, with the purpose through innovation to reduce coercion in the psychiatric hospital environment.

## PATIENT CASE

The background for the idea originated during a conversation with a patient in a closed psychiatric ward. The patient was not allowed to go outside as he was forcibly detained. What the patient wanted most of all was to take a long walk in nature, in the forest, which he argued would help him improve his mental state. Thus a dilemma occurred, because, how would this patient be able to take a walk in the forest while being forcibly detained in a closed psychiatric ward? It could not be complied with at that time. Nevertheless, are there other means by which this patient will be able to take a walk in the forest, while being detained?

We wanted to find out.



## THE IDEA

We came up with a suggestion, originated from experiments with virtual reality use by people with dementia. Here the technology is used to visually bring the afflicted persons back to places they have previously experienced, and thereby allowing them to re-live their memories. This experience helps to improve the quality of life of the affected person. A literature search revealed that virtual reality besides being used in connection to dementia, is used in psychological treatments, especially as an exposure therapy for disorders such as social anxiety, where virtual reality is used in combination with cognitive therapy (1) But also as an exposure therapy for PTSD(2).

## HOW WE INNOVATED THE IDEA

Our idea was to make a virtual reality platform and create a virtual sensory, that allows for the forcibly detained patient to move freely in calming nature surroundings such as forests, fields etc., all while the patient remains in the safe environment of the hospital.

The idea is still in the innovation stage. For prototyping, collaboration is needed with creators of virtual reality platforms and interested psychiatric wards as well as funding and further research.

(1) Anderson, P.L., Edwards, S.M. & Goodnight, J.R. Virtual reality and exposure group therapy for social anxiety disorder: Results from a 4-6 year follow-up. *Cogn Ther Res* 2017;41(2):230-236.  
(2) Norrholm, S.D. et al. Baseline psychophysiological and cortisol reactivity as a predictor of PTSD treatment outcome in virtual reality exposure therapy. *Behav Res Ther* 2016;82:28-37.