

Bringing the client and therapist together in virtual reality telepresence exposure therapy

D J Roberts, A J Fairchild, S Champion, A S Garcia, R Wolff

University of Salford, Salford, UK

www.salford.ac.uk/research/health-sciences/research-groups/virtual-reality

ABSTRACT

We present a technology demonstrator of the potential utility of our telepresence approach to supporting tele-therapy, in which client and remote therapist are immersed together. The aim is to demonstrate an approach in which a wide range of non-verbal communication between client and therapist can be contextualised within a shared simulation, even when the therapist is in the clinic and the client at home. The ultimate goal of the approach is to help the therapist to encourage the client to face a simulated threat while keeping them grounded in the safety of the present. The approach is to allow them to use non-verbal communication grounded in both the experience of the exposure and the current surroundings. While this is not new to exposure therapy, the challenges are: 1) to do this not only when the threat is simulated; and 2) when the client and therapist are apart. The technology approach combines immersive collaborative visualisation with free viewpoint 3D video based telepresence. The potential impact is to reduce dropout rate of exposure therapy for resistant clients.

Full papers will be published in the Conference Proceedings and will be freely available to delegates at the conference and online on September 20, 2016.