

Virtual Reality Based Mindfulness for Burnout Prevention in a Family Medicine Residency

Background and Objectives:

Burnout among family medicine physicians and residents is a significant problem. Burnout can affect everything from physician health to patient care. It is imperative to address this issue to improve physician well-being and healthcare as a whole. There is substantial evidence that a mindfulness practice can increase resiliency and work satisfaction while reducing burnout. We explored using Virtual reality (VR) as a way for residents to practice mindfulness.

Methods:

Eleven FM residents attended two didactic lectures on mindfulness and VR and then completed ten meditations using VR over one month. Qualitative data was then collected through interviews to better understand resident's views on using VR as a tool to practice mindfulness.

Results:

Advantages:

- Immersive meditations were helpful for resetting and relaxing after stressful encounters.
- VR is a good way to initiate a mindfulness practice for beginners.

Challenges:

- Residents felt pressed for time even with the short nature of the VR guided meditations.
- Some residents felt that they had too much screen time already and VR added to that.

Conclusions:

VR is a novel modality for implementing and sustaining a mindfulness practice for FM residents. It can be used in a busy clinical setting and can increase resilience and reduce burnout leading to improved physician well-being and patient care. Dedicated time set aside for a short mindfulness session during a busy clinic day is an important aspect of making this approach practical. Further quantitative research regarding this modality as a tool for practicing mindfulness should be explored.