

My therapist is a simulation: Risks and benefits of automated virtual reality therapies

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ABSTRACT

One of the problems of mental health systems is not providing traditional psychotherapy services for every person in need. Self-guided interventions are proved to be promising tools, especially when face-to-face interventions are not available or limited as a resource. Virtual reality is used for many years in clinical settings without major drawbacks. Automated virtual reality programs might provide innovative and attractive solutions with virtual exposure environments and avatar therapists. However, the benefits and risks of providing such programs should be taking into account. This article reviews the ethical concerns for using self-help applications and virtual reality as a self-support tool and proposes recommendations for future researchers and developers.

Keywords: automated therapies; cyber therapy, ethical concerns; self-help; virtual reality