

Regarding: Virtual Reality Exposure Therapy Model

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This document is written in regard to the mental health benefits of using interventions through a virtual reality module. Frontline Therapists was developed in the wake of the recent Artsakh war of 2020 to provide emergency mental health treatment for soldiers impacted by the trauma of combat. Initially our objective was to provide direct care in Military Hospitals, and we have expanded to provide long term comprehensive care in an office setting and in the field. Our treatment model is client centered, using various interventions from traditional format to alternative care including art therapy, ecopsychology, social engagement, and the use of virtual reality software to target specific trauma blocks.

Exposure therapy is a long standing intervention focused on targeting behaviors that people engage in, which mostly appears as avoidance, when responding to situations and thoughts or memories that cause negative responses. For instance, people that have been in combat may avoid going to social events because the loud noises and commotion may trigger memories of their experience in war. If avoidance is left untreated, it will further impact the person's quality of life and often worsen symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

By actively providing safe space to confront their trauma of feared situations, thoughts and emotions, the person can learn how to challenge their anxiety and reduce fear associated with these circumstances. While we can not put the soldier back in the field to challenge their trauma, this would be unsafe and damaging, we can now use virtual reality to give the illusion of combat in a safe way. When the soldier uses virtual reality system, they are in a space that is comforting and being guided by a professional therapist whom they already have a healthy trusting rapport with. The therapist guides them and supports them through this process to challenge their discomfort and learn to control their stress response.

While virtual reality exposure therapy is fairly new, studies with Vietnam War combat veterans who were immersed in a virtual environment that soldiers would normally come into contact with during combat, such as helicopters and jungles, found that these soldiers experienced a reduction of PTSD symptoms. This approach has also been used for veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, with positive results in both of these populations. We can now use this knowledge to provide treatment to our veterans of the Artsakh war, to reduce their PTSD symptoms and improve their quality of life in a more timely manner.

This opportunity to use new technology and new interventions to provide care can not go unseen or put on hold, we must act quickly to treat our young men that were severely impacted by the trauma caused in combat. Frontline Therapists are doing just that, to be the front runners of this treatment model and continue to be the beacon of comprehensive mental health treatment and service model of Armenia. We look forward to collaborating with those using the virtual reality model to treat physical limitations caused by combat, as it is just as highly recommended for physical rehabilitation purposes.

Kind Regards,



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