

The international debate on the using immersive virtual reality in Forensic Psychology: The Philippe-Pinel Institute experience

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Introduction & Aim: Virtual reality and related simulation technologies might change the way we do research and clinical forensic practice in the near future. Assessment of sexual preferences and of self-regulation processes, for instance, can be addressed through virtual reality (VR). VR can be used to track cognitive distortions and planning process of sexual aggression; daily life situations, elements of relapse cycle and stressing events can be simulated in VR to probe into these aspects of sexual aggression as if they were lived in real-time. In the same way, emotional regulation problems, empathy, cognitive distortions and social difficulties in antisocial individuals can be addressed in context, in complex simulated social interactions. Furthermore, the coupling of this kind of VR-based methodology to neu-

rofeedback and real-time brain-computer interface is about to give rise to new therapeutics for deviant behavior in the emerging field of neurorehabilitation. Realistic computer-generated stimuli (CGS) are central to all these uses of VR in the field of forensic psychology research and clinical practice.

Biography: Patrice Renaud is the director of the Virtual Reality Applications in Forensic Psychology (VRAFP) laboratory at the Philippe-Pinel Institute of Montreal, a maximum security psychiatric hospital based in Canada. He is the first researcher to have developed and tested a method to assess sexual preferences using virtual reality. VRAFP is the first virtual reality lab built for forensic clinical and research purposes.