

How smell is adding a new dimension to communication technology

The next generation of aromatherapy may be through virtual reality¹. Recently, VR start-up, OVR Technology, announced a new platform named INHALE Wellness Platform that incorporate smell with visual immersive experience. The combination allows users to take part in guided meditations in a virtual environment including the smell of pine forests, ocean breeze or fresh-cut grass².

It has often been thought that the lack of immersive scent has been a lost for VR technology. VR offers unique opportunity related to smell as the headset allows scent to be delivered

more precisely to the users' noses.

Recently, findings from a feasibility study of using olfactory virtual reality showed promising results. The work was done in collaboration between University of Vermont Medical Centre and OVR technology³. The program involves immersing psychiatry patients in a simulated forest camp environment including a mix of audio, visual and olfactory stimuli (fresh bacon and toasted marshmallows) for 8-12 minutes weekly. the volunteer participants

reported significant reduction in anxiety level and lasted up to 3 hours after a session³.

One of the key benefits of the olfactory virtual reality is its accessibility. Covid-19 travel restriction has fuelled virtual reality boom in both workplace as well as consumer entertainment. However, it has also hindered the access of patients to mental health professionals. The OVR technology has the potential to improve access and inclusion of patients in context of forced self-isolation or impacted by physical limitations or constraints⁴.

¹ <https://www.freethink.com/technology/vr-smell>

² Jesse Damiani, VR aromatherapy might be coming to a headset near you.

³ <https://www.eurekalert.org/news-releases/658503>

⁴ <https://www.integrativepractitioner.com/mental-emotional-spiritual/news/2021-06-17-olfactory-virtual-realities-show-promise-for-mental-health-integrative-care>

Activity Highlights from the POTION Team!

- The POTION clinical trial protocol titled *Does exposure to body odors increase the effect of mindfulness treatment in patients with depressive and social anxiety symptoms?* (ISRCTN64408867) has been registered and published on ISRCTN registry. ISRCTN is a registry to support open access to clinical trial data information and maximise the visibility of clinical trials data. <https://www.isrctn.com/ISRCTN64408867>
- University of Essex presented at 34th International Symposium on Computer-Based Medical System Conference (7 June 2021).
- Bright Night in Pisa (24th September 2021). POTION participated in the first in-person BRIGHT-NIGHT event held across the squares and streets of Pisa.
- Inventya participated in the webinar Connected Innovation intelligence hosted by Patsnap (08 April 2021).

Publication highlight

- Gomes N., Semin G.R. (2021) The Function of Fear Chemosignals: Preparing for Danger. *Chemical Senses*, Volume 46, 2021.

About POTION Project...



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