

# VR for nursing home residents: a practice project involving nursing students

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**Issue & Purpose.** Nursing home residents (NHR) have few opportunities to go outdoors. This project has a dual purpose:

- i) to empower nursing students with practical skills in facilitating VR experiences for NHR, and
- ii) to evaluate the feasibility and acceptability of delivering VR experiences to NHR.

**Description of the project.** The project was initiated in August 2022 as a collaboration between the University of South-Eastern Norway, Lier's Secondary School, and Drammen City. Supervised by teaching staff, third-year undergraduate nursing students plan and facilitate the VR experience (a 10-minute 360° video reproducing a sequence of natural landscapes) among the NHR of four nursing homes in Drammen. The students subsequently submit a report summarizing their field observations and reflections.

**Results.** To date, five groups of students (n=15) took part in the project. As expressed in the submitted reports, the initiative was generally positively evaluated by the students. Operating the VR headset and facilitating the experience was found to be unproblematic, though some time and skills was required for setting up the equipment. Despite some initial scepticism, most of the NHR agreed to try the VR experience. During the VR experience, the NHR generally showed a high sense of presence, commenting and pointing at what they were seeing and stating that they felt like they were "out in nature". In many instances, the VR experience triggered reminiscence. The NHR appeared to be more relaxed or in a better mood afterwards. The VR experience also seem to have elicited some socialization, as NHR tended to talk about it with each other. However, some NHR disliked the experience, and some found the headset uncomfortable or experienced cybersickness (mainly in the form of mild dizziness). Moreover, some refused to wear the VR headset, or removed it shortly after the video started.

**Lessons.** Facilitating the VR experience among NHR is feasible and generally well accepted. Technical challenges and possible adverse responses warrant careful consideration.

