



# Use of Immersive Technology to Improve Veteran Mental Health Services

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**VA**



U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs



# DEFINITIONS

Immersive  
Technology

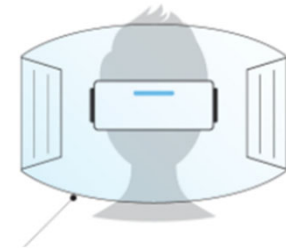
Extended Reality

Virtual Reality

Augmented Reality

## How does it work?

- Positive distraction
- Cognitive behavioral therapy
- Pain neuroscience education
- Other learned behaviors
- Physical rehabilitation (activity)



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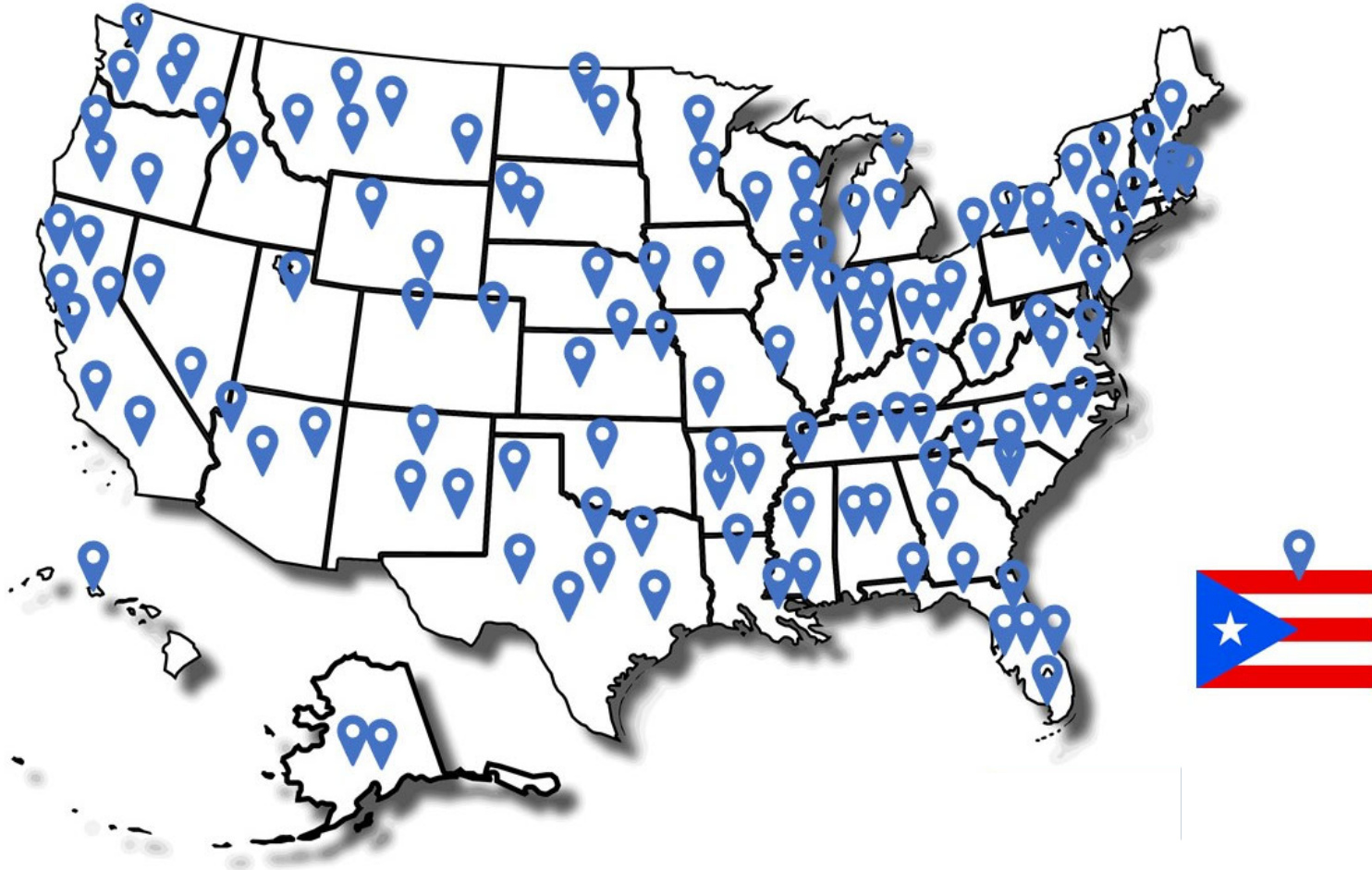


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# VA USE IN 2017: *PTSD, Pain, Anxiety*



# VA USE IN 2023: *30 Different Indications*



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## ***CURRENT STATE: By the Numbers***

- 1200+ headsets in all 50 States and Puerto Rico
- 145 VA hospitals with at least 1 headset
- 1730+ frontline staff from 169 sites
- 30 clinical and education use cases
- 1200+ unique Veteran experiences\*





## ***Veteran eXpeRience: #headsineadsets***

- Date of event: December 2022\*
- 44 Veteran attendees/responders
- 56% had never used VR before
- Average experience rating: 8.3
- 98% said it was easy to use or very easy to use
- 95% said they'd like more VR incorporated into care at the Medical Center
- 95% said they'd like more VR incorporated into care at home



# Effect of Immersive Virtual Reality on Pain and Anxiety at a Veterans Affairs Health Care Facility

Caitlin R. Rawlins<sup>1\*</sup>, Zachary Veigulis<sup>2</sup>, Catherine Hebert<sup>1</sup>, Catherine Curtin<sup>2,3</sup> and Thomas F. Osborne<sup>2,4</sup>

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**Objectives:** The primary objective of this evaluation is to determine the impact of virtual reality (VR) distraction on acute and chronic pain in Veterans within the Veterans Affairs Health Care System (VA). A secondary objective is to determine the impact of VR on the experience of stress and anxiety in Veterans utilizing VR for the indication of pain. A third objective is to develop an understanding of the Veteran experience of using VR in a healthcare setting.



"VR awakened Veterans to the possibility of expanding their use of non-pharmacologic therapies."

Rawlins, et.al  
2021

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# OPPORTUNITIES

- Validation and expansion of current use in PTSD, depression, anxiety, substance use disorder, suicide prevention, and others
- Peer support, group sessions in virtual worlds
- Equip non-mental health providers to augment mental health providers
- At-home self-care, such as life-skill development, guided physical activity, mindfulness, medication, and more
- Remote, asynchronous mental health care



"It is a lot easier to multiply headsets than mental health providers."

- Anne Lord Bailey  
Wall Street Journal  
April 16, 2023

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THE FUTURE OF EVERYTHING

## Confronting Your Fears in Virtual Reality Therapy

VR scenarios get more personal as doctors tailor therapy to individual experiences

