

Can virtual reality help losing weight?

Can an avatar in a virtual environment contribute to weight loss in the real world?

“Virtual reality is a powerful computer simulation of real situations in which the user interact as avatar and it can be used as support for a weight loss program” said Dr. Antonio Giordano and Dr. Giuseppe Russo of Sbarro Institute for Cancer Research and Molecular Medicine (Philadelphia, PA), in a study just published in *Journal of Diabetes Science and Technology*.

In the world, at least 2.8 million people die each year as a result of being overweight or obese; over 60% of all Americans are overweight or obese. In Italy, about 1 in 10 adults are obese and the adult obesity rates are anticipated to increase by 5% in the next 10 years. It is very difficult to keep the weight off. Diets and/or miracle pills and exercise programs? NO, the battle is still on.

“In this pilot study, we have created different virtual scenes where an avatar has to live everyday tasks such as walking on a treadmill or healthy grocery shopping” said Dr. Giordano and Dr. Russo. The international team created a DVD showing an overweight avatar living different virtual daily situations. The team enrolled 8 overweight American women and demonstrated that this DVD helped these participants to gather new information on how to lose weight. *“This study represents how virtual reality can contribute to behavioral improvement of human health”* concluded Dr. Giordano and Dr. Russo.



Example of healthy grocery shopping.

Other authors of the study include Dr. Melissa Napolitano at George Washington University, Dr. Sharon Hayes and Dr. Gary Foster both at Temple University and Dr. Debora Muresu at Sbarro Institute for Cancer Research and Molecular Medicine.

Dr. Antonio Giordano is Director and Founder of Sbarro Health Research Organization at Philadelphia, PA (www.shro.org) and professor of Pathology and Oncology at University of Siena, Italy.

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/udt848yiryoliqv/Video%201.mp4>

PRESS REVIEW

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