

For Release February 19, 2004

SAVE-THE-DATE



WHAT: Virtual reality technologies are proving to be an important new tool in medical science. The National Institute on Drug Abuse, National Institutes of Health, is hosting "*Virtual Reality: Opportunities for the NIH*" to highlight the latest scientific findings on the current and potential roles for virtual reality technologies in medicine.

This one-day symposium will feature presentations by multidisciplinary experts who will describe the theory and applications of virtual reality (computer-generated stimulus environments), emphasizing how this technology is being used in prevention and treatment therapies for drug abuse, post-traumatic stress disorder, eating disorders, phobias, and pain.

WHEN: Tuesday, February 24, 2004
8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

WHERE: Lister Hill Auditorium
National Library of Medicine
Building 38A, National Institutes of Health
(Medical Center stop on the Metro's Red line)

WHO: [Featured Speakers Listed on the Agenda that follows.](#)
NOTE: Each presentation will be followed by a brief question and discussion session

INFO: The media are encouraged to attend. For more information, please call the NIDA Press Office at 301-443-6245.

The National Institute on Drug Abuse is a component of the National Institutes of Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. NIDA supports more than 85 percent of the world's research on the health aspects of drug abuse and addiction. The Institute carries out a large variety of programs to ensure the rapid dissemination of research information and its implementation in policy and practice. Fact sheets on the health effects of drugs of abuse and further information on NIDA research can be found on the NIDA web site at <http://www.drugabuse.gov>.

Agenda

Welcome (8:35 am - 8:50 am)

Dr. Nora D. Volkow, NIDA Director

Albert Rizzo, Ph.D. (8:55 am - 9:40 am)
Director, Virtual Environments Laboratory
Integrated Media Systems Center & School of Gerontology,
Los Angeles, CA

Dr. Rizzo will introduce virtual reality technologies to the audience and highlight some of the applications of this Technology. Dr. Rizzo's primary expertise is in Assessment and Rehabilitation.

Brenda Wiederhold, Ph.D. (NIDA Grantee) (9:40 am - 10:10 am)
The Virtual Reality Medical Center, San Diego, CA

Dr. Wiederhold will discuss how virtual reality technology is being used in clinics throughout the world to treat various phobias, including fear of flying, driving,

heights, snakes and spiders.

BREAK

(10:20 am - 10:40 am)

Giuseppe Riva, Ph.D.

Universita Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Milan, Italy

(10:45 am - 11:15 am)

Dr. Riva will discuss how virtual reality can be used to "confront" patients with the distorted perceptions about the way they look.

Barbara O. Rothbaum, Ph.D. (NIDA Grantee)

Director, Trauma and Anxiety Recovery Program
Emory University School of Medicine, Atlanta, Georgia

(11:25 am - 11:55 am)

Dr. Rothbaum will highlight how virtual reality can be used to present cues associated with drug abuse (cocaine and nicotine) in order to study drug craving. She will also show how virtual reality might be used to desensitize patients to the cues associated with drug taking.

LUNCH

(12:05 pm - 1:20 pm)

Joann Difede, Ph.D. (NIDA Grantee)

Program for Anxiety and Traumatic Stress Studies, New York, NY

(1:25 pm - 1:55 pm)

Dr. Difede will describe how she uses virtual reality to treat people suffering from stress related to the events of 9/11 (including stress in firemen who were at the site).

Hunter Hoffman, Ph.D.

University of Washington, Seattle, WA

(2:05 pm - 2:35 pm)

Dr. Hoffman will discuss how virtual reality can be used to distract patients during painful acute procedures, including burn wound care.

BREAK

(2:45 pm - 3:05 pm)

Walter Greenleaf, Ph.D.

Greenleaf Medical, San Diego, CA

(3:05 pm - 3:35 pm)

Dr. Greenleaf will discuss how virtual reality can be used during physical therapy treatments.

Mark Wiederhold, M.D., Ph.D. (NIDA Grantee)

The Virtual Reality Medical Center, San Diego, CA

(3:45 pm - 4:15 pm)

Dr. Wiederhold will discuss the future of virtual reality and its medical applications.

Closing Remarks/Adjourn

(4:15 pm)

