

## 29. VIDEO GAMES IN PSYCHOSOCIAL REHABILITATION FOR SCHIZOPHRENIA PATIENTS



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**Introduction.** Schizophrenia is a lifelong and vigorously disabling condition, described by mental decline, positive and negative symptoms. While antipsychotic drugs and psycho-social interventions have shown efficacy in treating positive symptoms, negative symptoms and cognitive deficits often present ongoing challenges. Cognitive remediation therapies, specifically designed to address cognitive deficits in schizophrenia, have been proposed and found effective. Recent MRI studies indicate that commercial video games can induce changes in brain areas similar to those targeted by specialized training programs. The potential increase in gray matter and functional brain modulations, if translated into improved cognitive and everyday functioning, could make video game training an enjoyable and economically feasible treatment option for individuals with neuropsychiatric disorders. Nowadays video games, including virtual reality, are being explored as therapeutic tools for cognitive and social impairment in schizophrenia.

**Aim of study.** Schizophrenia, a chronic and severe mental disorder, poses unique challenges to both individuals diagnosed with the condition and the healthcare professionals tasked with their treatment. Traditional approaches to schizophrenia rehabilitation often involve a combination of medication, psychotherapy, and social support. However, as we delve into the 21st century, the intersection of technology and mental health is giving rise to innovative methods, with video games emerging as a promising tool in the rehabilitation of patients with schizophrenia.

**Methods and materials.** In a review of studies conducted between 2018 and 2023, the benefits of video games for individuals with schizophrenia and related disorders were examined.

**Results.** Active engagement with video games is associated with enhanced aerobic fitness and cognitive performance, potentially leading to improved functional outcomes and quality of life for individuals facing cognitive impairments and social challenges. Therapeutic software, designed for specific therapeutic goals in psychosocial rehabilitation, has demonstrated positive impacts on residual symptomatology, cognitive remediation, social skills, and everyday life activities in individuals with schizophrenia.

**Conclusion.** Thus, while computer-assisted therapy, video games, and virtual reality show promise as adjunctive therapies, their recommendation in the field of psychiatry, particularly for individuals with schizophrenia, remains premature due to the recent and preliminary nature of most studies. However, the evidence quality is low, and more data are required to establish the comparative effectiveness of cognitive approaches and traditional video games in schizophrenia treatment.