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A Review on the Impact of Virtual Reality and Visual Illusions in Managing Neuropathic Pain in Spinal Cord Injury

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Abstract: *Background: The worldwide association for the study of pain defines neuropathic pain as "pain caused by a lesion or disease of the somatosensory nervous system." Spinal cord injury patients may have 40-60% neuropathic pain, which is difficult to cure. First-line therapy is usually pharmacologic, however only 30-50% of patients benefit. There is little research on nonpharmacologic therapy. VR and VI training may help treat neuropathic pain.*
Methods: In April 2017, PubMed, CINHAL, Scopus, and Embase databases generated 38 publications using similar search keywords. Six articles remained after duplication, title, abstract, and inclusion/exclusion screens. This systematic evaluation examined the efficacy of VR and VI training in treating neuropathic pain in spinal cord injury patients. Results: Six papers were reviewed after the electronic search and screening. Five of six papers showed that VR and VI improved neuropathic pain intensity and quality. Conclusion: VR and VI in spinal cord injury therapy may significantly reduce neuropathic pain. Compared to pharmaceutical therapies, VI or VR was a suitable choice for neuropathic pain management.

Keywords: spinal cord injury, virtual reality, visual illusion.