

# Self-guided virtual reality therapy for social anxiety disorder

<b>Submission date</b> 31/01/2022	<b>Recruitment status</b> No longer recruiting	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Prospectively registered <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Protocol
<b>Registration date</b> 02/02/2022	<b>Overall study status</b> Completed	<input type="checkbox"/> Statistical analysis plan <input type="checkbox"/> Results
<b>Last Edited</b> 30/08/2024	<b>Condition category</b> Mental and Behavioural Disorders	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Individual participant data <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Record updated in last year

## Plain English summary of protocol

### Background and study aims

Social anxiety disorder (SAD), also called social phobia, is a long-term and overwhelming fear of social situations. Cognitive behavior therapy (CBT) is therapy that helps you identify negative thought patterns and behaviours, and change them. CBT is the first-line treatment for SAD, yet its accessibility is often constrained with long waiting times. Digital therapeutic applications, including psychoeducation and self-guided behavioral experiments in virtual reality (VR), could facilitate access and reduce waiting times. Psychoeducation involves learning about and understanding mental health and wellbeing. The study aims to investigate if self-guided digital therapeutic applications, offering ultra-short-time therapy combined with VR components, can reduce the severity of SAD.

### Who can participate?

Patients with Social Anxiety Disorder as a primary disorder.

### What does the study involve?

Participants take part in a brief diagnostic process containing a phone screening and two therapeutic appointments. If a social anxiety disorder is diagnosed, participants are randomized into an experimental or a control group. Participants in the experimental group receive a prescription for a therapeutic application. After six weeks, in which they must complete psychoeducation, they meet with a therapist, and the virtual reality exposition is activated. After four weeks, participants have a final appointment to reflect on their experience. At each appointment and on a six-week follow-up, questionnaires are filled in. The control group also has an equal amount of appointments with a therapist but does not get a prescription for the therapeutic application until the fifth appointment (six-week follow up).

### What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?

A possible benefit is that the application-based therapy may help to reduce participants' anxiety. Including VR in therapy could relieve therapists and help reduce the waiting time for patients. The results of this study can have a great impact on therapeutic interventions and inform future research on VR in therapy. There are no significant risks of participating in the study.

Where is the study run from?  
University of Siegen (Germany)

When is the study starting and how long is it expected to run for?  
April 2021 to January 2024

Who is funding the study?  
DFG-Graduiertenkolleg 2493 "Folgen Sozialer Hilfen" (<https://folgensozialerhilfen.de/>)  
(Germany)

Who is the main contact?  
Anne Sophie Hildebrand, [anne.hildebrand@uni-siegen.de](mailto:anne.hildebrand@uni-siegen.de)

## Contact information

**Type(s)**  
Scientific

**Contact name**  
Ms Anne Sophie Hildebrand

**ORCID ID**  
<http://orcid.org/0000-0002-5612-4083>

**Contact details**  
DFG-Research Training Group 2493  
Hölderlinstr. 3  
Siegen  
Germany  
57076  
+49(0) 271-740-3688  
[anne.hildebrand@uni-siegen.de](mailto:anne.hildebrand@uni-siegen.de)

## Additional identifiers

**EudraCT/CTIS number**  
Nil known

**IRAS number**

**ClinicalTrials.gov number**  
Nil known

**Secondary identifying numbers**  
Nil known

## Study information

**Scientific Title**

# Self-guided virtual reality therapy for social anxiety disorder: a study protocol for a randomized controlled trial

## Study objectives

We expect that patients who receive application-based treatment will show less symptoms of social anxiety at an interim, a post, and a 6-weeks follow-up assessment, compared to the control group. To test a clinically relevant change, the remission rates of patients between both groups will be compared at the follow-up assessment.

## Ethics approval required

Old ethics approval format

## Ethics approval(s)

Approved 08/11/2019, Ethics Committee of the University of Siegen (Jonas Kameboge, Adolf-Reichwein-Str. 2a, NA, 57076, Germany; +490271 740-4819; ethikrat@uni-siegen.de), ref: ER\_84\_2021

## Study design

Interventional randomized controlled trial

## Primary study design

Interventional

## Secondary study design

Randomised controlled trial

## Study setting(s)

Hospital

## Study type(s)

Treatment

## Participant information sheet

Not available in web format, please use contact information to request a participant information sheet

## Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied

Self-guided treatment for patients with social anxiety disorder

## Interventions

The study is a single-center randomized controlled trial. Relative changes in SAD symptoms (interim vs. baseline, post vs. baseline, follow-up vs. baseline) will be compared between a group receiving a digital (VR) application and a control group will be compared in a superiority design. The study employs a 2 (condition: application-based vs. control treatment) x 4 (time: baseline assessment, interim assessment, post assessment, and 6-weeks-follow-up) design.

Participants will be randomly assigned to the experimental (EG) or control group (CG), according to an externally constructed randomization plan.

EG: Four meetings with a therapist + psychoeducation and virtual reality exposition via the application Invirto

CG: Four meetings with a therapist

### **Intervention Type**

Behavioural

### **Primary outcome measure**

Questionnaire on social anxiety and social competence deficits (SASKO) measured on the second, third and fourth appointment

### **Secondary outcome measures**

Remission, measured via Mini-DIPS at the baseline and follow-up assessment

### **Overall study start date**

11/04/2021

### **Completion date**

01/01/2024

## **Eligibility**

### **Key inclusion criteria**

Social anxiety disorder (F40.1)

### **Participant type(s)**

Patient

### **Age group**

Adult

### **Sex**

Both

### **Target number of participants**

60

### **Total final enrolment**

181

### **Key exclusion criteria**

1. Stroke or coronary in the past
2. Angina pectoris
3. Cardiac arrhythmias
4. Hypertension
5. Asthma or a chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)
6. Pregnancy or the suspicion
7. Strong visual disorders
8. Epilepsy or seizures in the past
9. Psychological disorders with organic cause (for example dementia)

10. Vertigo
11. Vestibular impairments
12. Psychological or behavioral disorders because of the consumption of psychoactive substances
13. Schizophrenia, schizotypal or delusional disorders
14. Severe depression or mania
15. Acute suicidal tendencies or lack of capability to negotiate a no-suicide agreement
16. Not yet in therapy

**Date of first enrolment**

01/03/2022

**Date of final enrolment**

01/01/2024

## **Locations**

**Countries of recruitment**

Germany

**Study participating centre**

**Outpatient Center for Psychotherapy of the University of Siegen**

Weidenauer Str. 167

Siegen

Germany

57076

## **Sponsor information**

**Organisation**

University of Siegen

**Sponsor details**

Adolf-Reichwein-Straße 2

Siegen

Germany

57076

+49 2717400

presse@uni-siegen.de

**Sponsor type**

University/education

**Website**

<https://www.uni-siegen.de/start/>

ROR

<https://ror.org/02azyry73>

## Funder(s)

### Funder type

Research organisation

### Funder Name

Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft

### Alternative Name(s)

German Research Association, German Research Foundation, DFG

### Funding Body Type

Government organisation

### Funding Body Subtype

National government

### Location

Germany

## Results and Publications

### Publication and dissemination plan

Planned publication of the study protocol in Trials

Planned publication in a high-impact peer-reviewed journal

### Intention to publish date

10/01/2025

### Individual participant data (IPD) sharing plan

The dataset will be available upon request from the corresponding author (Anne Sophie Hildebrand, [anne.hildebrand@uni-siegen.de](mailto:anne.hildebrand@uni-siegen.de)). The data will be available after the overall trial end.

### IPD sharing plan summary

Available on request

### Study outputs

Output type	Details	Date created	Date added	Peer reviewed?	Patient-facing?
<a href="#">Protocol article</a>		12/05/2022	16/05/2022	Yes	No
<a href="#">Dataset</a>			21/08/2024	No	No