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The use of a new virtual reality software in psychiatric inpatient wards

Submission date
06/10/2025

Recruitment status
No longer recruiting

Registration date
10/11/2025

Overall study status
Completed

Last Edited
13/03/2026

Condition category
Mental and Behavioural Disorders

[ ] Prospectively registered
[ ] Protocol
[ ] Statistical analysis plan
[ ] Results
[ ] Individual participant data
[X] Record updated in last year

Plain English summary of protocol

Background and study aims
The current study aims to examine the feasibility and acceptability of a virtual reality (VR) app for use on inpatient psychiatric wards. The study will be completed in two stages. Stage One is a co-design stage, and Stage Two is the Pilot stage.

Who can participate?
Adult staff who are currently working on an inpatient ward at Springfield University Hospital, and adult inpatients at Springfield University Hospital.

What does the study involve?
A VR hypnotherapy app that has been developed in collaboration with the company Phase Space will be trialled with psychiatric inpatients.

Stage One
Sixteen patients and six staff members will be recruited at this stage. The first eight patients will test the headset and provide feedback. Based on this, the app will be modified by Phase Space and then trialled by an additional eight patients. Concurrently with the recruitment of the 16 patients, six staff members from the ward will be recruited to complete an interview about the feasibility and use of VR headsets on the ward. The total feedback will be taken back to Phase Space, which will further modify the app to be implemented in the pilot stage.

Stage Two
The Pilot stage will be held in the sensory rooms of two inpatient psychiatric wards. The recruitment period will last four weeks. During the four-week period, participants will have the option of attending a drop-in session held on their ward. The drop-in session will be held twice weekly for the four-week period and participants will be able to use the VR headset during this time period. They will be able to attend the drop-in session as frequently as they would like over the four week period, meaning that they have the ability to attend up to eight drop-in sessions. The new app will be piloted on sixteen inpatients to see if it is deemed acceptable and feasible for use on inpatient wards. the first use of the headset, as well as after four sessions (or earlier if the participant decides to end involvement before they reach four sessions). If a participant attends all eight sessions, they will complete the questionnaires again after the eighth session.

Additionally, participants will complete the VR Comment Card before and after each use of the VR headset. Participants will also complete a short qualitative interview after their last session. The interview will comprise of asking participants to provide any feedback they have on the VR, as well as understanding more about how they could see the VR implemented into a ward setting.

Staff members will be recruited to assist in the running of the VR drop-in sessions. Staff will also be asked to provide any feedback on the sessions and observations of the sessions through a diary. At the end of the recruitment window, staff will also be asked to complete a short interview asking about topics such as any changes in participants' behaviour after the VR, logistical challenges around patients using the headsets, how the equipment was looked after and maintained, locations used for the VR and demands on staff time for the rollout.

What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?
There are no guaranteed benefits to taking part in the study. The use of the VR headset may provide participants with feelings of reduced stress. Study involvement also benefits the future of the study, as feedback will be used to develop the software further so it can possibly be implemented in clinical settings. All participants will also receive a gift voucher as a thank you for participation (£20 for Stage One, £30 for Stage Two).

It is not anticipated that any significant risks will be involved in the study. It is possible to feel cybersickness when using a VR headset. If this occurs, participants can take off the headset to let the symptoms subside. Participants can also withdraw involvement in the study at any point. It is not anticipated that participants will feel distressed due to study involvement, but if they do, the researchers can alert their care team and participants. If there are any technological problems with the VR headset, the researcher present will be trained to work through the problems.

Where is the study run from?
Springfield University Hospital, UK.

When is the study starting and how long is it expected to run for?
February 2025 to January 2026

Who is funding the study?
1. Medical Research Council (MRC), UK
2. Phase Space Ltd, UK

Who is the main contact?
Megan Cartier, megan.cartier@swlstg.nhs.uk

Contact information

Type(s)
Scientific, Principal investigator, Public

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Additional identifiers

ClinicalTrials.gov (NCT)
NCT06917456

Integrated Research Application System (IRAS)
351569

Central Portfolio Management System (CPMS)
63655

Protocol serial number
APP49548

Study information

Scientific Title
The codesign and evaluation of a novel virtual reality intervention for use in psychiatric inpatient wards

Study objectives
Stage One: Gain feedback and reactions of patients and staff on the use of the VR headset to refine the VR content and provide input on the design of the Pilot

Stage Two: Explore the feasibility of the use of VR in inpatient wards

Ethics approval required
Ethics approval required

Ethics approval(s)
Approved 16/07/2025, East of England - Cambridge Central Research Ethics Committee (2 Redman Place, Stratford, London, E20 1JQ, United Kingdom; +44 (0)2071048285; cambridgecentral.rec@hra.nhs.uk), ref: 25/EE/0097

Primary study design
Interventional

Allocation
N/A: single arm study

Masking
Open (masking not used)

Control
Uncontrolled

Assignment
Single

Purpose
Single-site interventional pilot study

Study type(s)
Other

Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied
Mental health conditions

Interventions
This study examines the use of a virtual reality headset for mental health conditions.

There is no randomisation plan for the study as all participants will test out the virtual reality headset. They will use the headset to watch a seven-minute immersive experience, aimed at helping with feelings of stress and aiding in relaxation. Participants receive information on the programme before use and are aided in the use of the headset by two trained researchers. The study of the headset will be done in-person within the wards within the sensory or calm rooms, so participants have a quiet space to try out the headset.

Intervention Type
Device

Phase
Not Applicable

Drug/device/biological/vaccine name(s)
Virtual reality hypnotherapy app and headset

Primary outcome(s)

1. Stage One: Gather feedback and reactions of both staff and patients on the use of the VR headset to refine the content and provide input on the design of the Pilot, measured using qualitative interviews with patients and staff at the end of study involvement
2. Stage Two: Explore the feasibility of the use of VR in inpatient wards, measured using qualitative interviews with patients and staff at the end of study involvement

Key secondary outcome(s)
1. Stage One: Produce an implementation model to be tested in a Pilot, identify any areas requiring further modification, learn how to prepare staff and patients for the VR experience, identify the best location for the VR experience, and understand the practicalities of the headsets, measured using qualitative interviews with staff and patients at the end of study involvement
2. Stage Two: Explore the impact of the VR on patients measured using the Simulator Sickness Questionnaire, Patient Health Questionnaire-8 (PHQ-8), Generalized Anxiety Disorder 7-item Scale (GAD-7), Dissociative Experiences Scale – II (DES-II), Brief Psychiatric Rating Scale (BPRS), Positive and Negative Syndrome Scale (PANSS) at baseline and at the end of study involvement

Completion date
09/03/2026

Eligibility

Key inclusion criteria
Current key inclusion criteria as of 21/01/2026:

Staff:
1. Currently working on an inpatient ward at Springfield University Hospital
2. Able to provide informed consent

Patients:
1. 18 years of age or older
2. Current inpatient at Springfield University Hospital
3. Able to provide informed consent

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Previous key inclusion criteria:

Staff:
1. Currently working on an inpatient ward at Springfield University Hospital
2. Able to provide informed consent

Patients:
1. Aged 18-65 years old
2. Current inpatient at Springfield University Hospital
3. Able to provide informed consent

Participant type(s)
Health professional, Patient

Healthy volunteers allowed
No

Age group
Mixed

Lower age limit
18 Years

Upper age limit
100 Years

Sex
All

Total final enrolment
43

Key exclusion criteria
Staff:
1. Not currently working on an inpatient ward at Springfield University Hospital
2.Unable to provide informed consent

Patients:
1. Unable to provide informed consent
2. Has a history of seizures
3. Has a pacemaker

Date of first enrolment
13/08/2025

Date of final enrolment
23/02/2026

Locations

Countries of recruitment
United Kingdom

England

Study participating centre
South West London & St. George's Mental Health NHS Trust
Springfield University Hospital
Trinity Building
15 Springfield Drive
London
England
SW17 0YF

Sponsor information

Organisation
South West London and St George's Mental Health NHS Trust

ROR
https://ror.org/003pb1s55

Funder(s)

Funder type
Government

Funder Name
Medical Research Council

Alternative Name(s)
Medical Research Council (United Kingdom), UK Medical Research Council, Medical Research Committee and Advisory Council, MRC

Funding Body Type
Government organisation

Funding Body Subtype
National government

Location
United Kingdom

Funder Name
Phase Space

Results and Publications

Individual participant data (IPD) sharing plan

IPD sharing plan summary
Not expected to be made available