

October 2021

Embodying the Patient Experience: The Application of Virtual Reality (VR) in the Healthcare Classroom

Jenna Sadue
Nazareth College

Linda Riek
Nazareth College

Follow this and additional works at: <https://repository.rit.edu/frameless>



Part of the [Educational Technology Commons](#), [Health Information Technology Commons](#), and the [Medical Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Sadue, Jenna and Riek, Linda (2021) "Embodying the Patient Experience: The Application of Virtual Reality (VR) in the Healthcare Classroom," *Frameless*: Vol. 4: Iss. 1, Article 4.
Available at: <https://repository.rit.edu/frameless/vol4/iss1/4>

This Research Abstract is brought to you for free and open access by the RIT Libraries. For more information, please contact repository@rit.edu.

Embodying the Patient Experience: The Application of Virtual Reality (VR) in the Healthcare Classroom

Jenna Sadue*
Teaching & Learning Technologies
Nazareth College

Linda Riek
Physical Therapy
Nazareth College

Nazareth College is known for its personalized education, a focus on social justice, and the support of students as they pursue their life's work.

Our faculty community is also dedicated to innovative teaching and learning practices which can include the intentional integration of technologies to transform the student experience. Through the adoption of embodied virtual reality (VR) experiences embedded at key points in the curriculum, our health professions faculty have identified a way for their graduate and undergraduate programs to expand students' capacity for empathy prior to starting in-person clinical experiences. This short talk will focus on the ways in which three specific health professions programs have successfully integrated VR in the curriculum – Communications Sciences & Disorders, Physical Therapy, and Social Work - and the student perspective of those experiences.



Fig. 1. Still image of The Beatriz Lab, a VR experience of a senior patient with Alzheimer's Disease. (Image source)

The Teaching & Learning Technologies unit at Nazareth College stumbled upon the use of VR for clinical preparation in the healthcare classroom during a professional conference. At that conference, a California State University nursing program shared how the integration of VR “embodied” experiences actually moved the needle on teaching students vital soft skills, like empathy for patients, prior to entering their clinical rotations. The data was so compelling that we

*Corresponding Author, Jenna Sadue
Submitted April 13th, 2022
Accepted April 13th, 2022
Published online April 18th, 2022

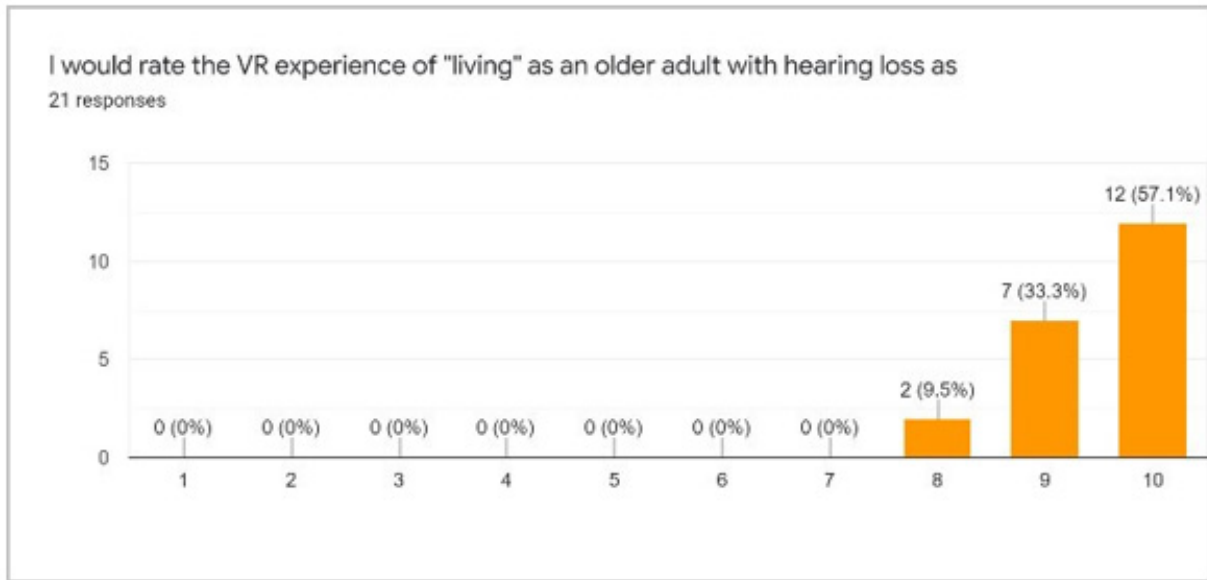


Fig. 2. Student response to a post-experience question rating the VR experience on a scale of 1-10, with 10 being “very valuable to my learning about hearing loss.”

researched the company which created the VR labs for healthcare professionals, called Embodied Labs, and decided to pilot the labs on the Nazareth College campus to see if our students experienced similar growth.

The pilot experience started with our Communication Sciences & Disorders (CSD) program, specifically integrating the “Alfred” patient experience in our Aural Rehabilitation undergraduate course. Alfred is a VR patient with vision and hearing loss.

Our team administered pre-and-post experience surveys to collect data from student participants in the course during the Fall 2019 semester. The student respondents demonstrated significant growth in their understanding of the perspective of an older adult with hearing loss. Overall, the student respondents rated the VR experience as valuable to their learning. See figure 2 for more information.

The success in our CSD program sparked a shift in other health professions’ programs. In this 20 minute talk, we will briefly cover how we adopted Embodied Labs VR on our campus, explore how our Physical Therapy and Social Work programs decided to integrate different VR labs in their curriculum, and share the student perspective. Overall, both our faculty and students view VR as an integral and transformative piece of their healthcare education at Nazareth College.

Keywords—*Virtual Reality, Embodied Labs, Immersive Learning, Healthcare Education, Student Experience*