



Virtual reality conquers flying fears

Therapy conditions subjects to deal with experience of being in a plane

By Anna Repici

One of the best therapies to challenge the fear of flying is offered by the Center for Advanced Multimedia Psychotherapy which provides a "virtual reality" exposure treatment.

The center is attached to

at California School of Professional Psychology in San Diego. She is nationally certified in biofeedback and neurofeedback by the Biofeedback Certification Institute of America, and serves on the editorial board of *CyberPsychology and Behavior Journal*.

expert on the application of virtual reality to treat phobias and other conditions. In her recent article, "A review of virtual reality as a psychotherapeutic tool," her husband, Mark D. Wiederhold, and she discuss the use of virtual reality techniques for medical applications, from simple phobias to potential applications, clinical outcomes and cost effectiveness.

flight simulation. The clients have a "virtual experience" of flying, things like sitting on an aircraft with engines off or on, taxiing on a runway, landing, take-off, flight in good weather or during turbulence and a thunderstorm.

The patient is conditioned in controlled stages, which elicit higher levels of anxiety and depression. Breath, brain and heartbeat are constantly set under a strict control, and as

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The center is attached to the California School of Professional Psychology in the University City area.

The center's director is Brenda Wiederhold. She is a Ph.D. candidate in Clinical Health Psychology

at the center she uses integrated models of therapy to treat patients with anxiety disorders, stress-related disorders and psychological disorders. She is an accredited

The treatment consists of placing the client in a three-



Brenda Wiederhold