

Workshop: Virtual reality (VR) as an ecologically valid tool for studying and changing fear and anxiety

Lecturers: P. Pauli, M. Müller

Target group: The workshop is designed for PhD, Postdoctoral, and advanced Masters students from different backgrounds such as neuroscience, biology, or psychology, and uses a combination of video demonstrations and hands-on experience.

Virtual reality is a computer generated interactive environment that allows the user to become immersed in, and feel present in, the virtual world. This allows ecologically valid environments to be presented to probands and patients within a laboratory environment, and their behavioural and psychological responses to be assessed. Research into anxiety and anxiety disorders has successfully used this technology (1) within the framework of exposure therapy, and (2) to study contextual conditioning as a model for sustained anxiety. Both approaches will be discussed and demonstrated using a head-mounted display setup.