



News Release

For Immediate Release
Contact: Emily Coder
215.581.2006

December 18, 2019

Therapeutic Intervention Using Virtual Reality

Philadelphia--- Visiting Nurse Association of Philadelphia Awarded Grant for Virtual Reality

Thanks to a \$25,000 grant from the Independence Foundation, VNA Philadelphia will launch therapeutic intervention using the cutting edge technology of virtual reality. One of the premiere providers of home health, palliative and hospice services in the Philadelphia area, VNA Philadelphia has a 15-bed inpatient hospice unit where the pilot program will begin. The purpose of "VR Journeys" is to bring pain and anxiety relief to patients during the last phase of their lives.

The effectiveness of adjunct therapies, like VR, is changing the healthcare landscape. The stigma of addiction associated with opioids may lead patients and families to refuse the use of medicine; however, early research shows great promise in the use of virtual reality as a tool for providing symptom relief. "We are thrilled and very grateful to the Independence Foundation for allowing us to pilot this virtual reality program and offer relief to our hospice patients," says Elwood Hungarter, President and CEO of VNA Philadelphia. Under the basic concept of distraction therapy, virtual reality diverts a patient's attention away from their reality. Recent studies show that patients who were given a virtual reality headset with access to different immersive experiences were more than three times likely to have a reduction in pain. Because this treatment method is relatively new, nothing has yet been produced regarding long-term effects, but there is great promise that the use of virtual reality can teach pain and anxiety management.

The only free-standing Hospice Inpatient Unit in Philadelphia, VNA Philadelphia offers a home environment for patients and families who require a more acute level of care. A sliding comfort-scale will be developed and administered by staff at VNA Philadelphia with the technology being offered to hospice patients who meet the criteria and express consent. Software and headsets will be purchased from appliedVR, a leader in therapeutic virtual reality, which has worked with Cedars-Sinai Medical Center for years.

VNA Philadelphia's "VR Journeys" project just launched.

###

VNA Philadelphia is the oldest and one of the largest non-profit home health and hospice providers in the region and one of the most innovative in the nation. Founded in 1886, VNA Philadelphia is headquartered in the East Falls section of the city. VNA Philadelphia is Medicare Certified, licensed by the State of Pennsylvania, and Accredited by the Community Health Accreditation Program (CHAP).

To find out more about the VNA, contact us at 215-473-0772 or visit www.vnaphilly.org.