

Doctors Use Wii Games for Physical Therapy

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I love the versatility of the Nintendo Wii, a video game system that's become very popular and is relatively inexpensive (compared to its competitors anyways). The Wii revolutionized gaming through its use of an interactive controller that allows participants to manipulate on-screen behaviors through parallel real-life actions. Want to swing a virtual golf club in a game? You have to take a stance with the Wii's controller similar to using a real golf club. It's a simple idea, but with very powerful consequences.

It was only a matter of time before professionals started to make use of this technology for more direct benefits, such as helping a person recover from a physical injury. Which is exactly what doctors are doing, as described in yesterday's *Washington Post* article, [Doctors Use Wii Games for Rehab Therapy](#):

Using the game console's unique, motion-sensitive controller, Wii games require body movements similar to traditional therapy exercises. But patients become so engrossed mentally they're almost oblivious to the rigor, Osborn said.

"In the Wii system, because it's kind of a game format, it does create this kind of inner competitiveness. Even though you may be boxing or playing tennis against some figure on the screen, it's amazing how many of our patients want to beat their opponent," said Osborn of Southern Illinois Healthcare, which includes the hospital in Herrin. The hospital, about 100 miles southeast of St. Louis, bought a Wii system for rehab patients late last year.

The competitiveness found in the Wii games helps a person in physical therapy overcome the usual boredom and tediousness associated with many traditional physical therapy exercises.

Fantastic! A living example of the psychology of engaging patients to do something they don't really want to do by focusing their minds on something more interesting and entertaining.

There are probably a lot more interesting opportunities for health-based use of the Wii, and we look forward to seeing what enterprising companies develop in the years to come.

<http://psychcentral.com/blog/archives/2008/02/10/doctors-use-wii-games-for-physical-therapy/>
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