

Abstract

Virtual embodiment research has shown that taking on another body can alter perception, agency, and social-cognitive responses. In healthcare education, this offers more than a novel teaching format: it provides a way to study how embodied perspective-taking reshapes clinicians' understanding of patient experience.

In this talk, I present our research line on patient-embodied virtual reality in healthcare, in which healthcare professionals inhabit a first-person patient perspective during the perioperative trajectory. Across our work, the virtual experiences are not designed merely to transmit information, but to make participants feel the emotional and interpersonal consequences of communication style, environmental cues, and loss of control.

Drawing on our phenomenological studies, our framework for developing patient-embodied experiences, and subsequent work on immersive team training, I argue that patient-embodied VR functions as both an educational intervention and an experimental embodiment paradigm. It enables the study of how experiential, affective, and relational forms of knowledge emerge through virtual body transfer and how these may influence reflection, therapeutic communication, and future behaviour in clinical settings.

In line with the symposium's theme *In Minor Keys*, I propose that patient-embodied VR offers access to subtle, often underexamined dimensions of embodiment: introspection, tonal ambiguity, and the lived texture of being acted upon rather than acting. The talk will discuss conceptual implications, methodological challenges, and the potential for shared frameworks between embodiment science and healthcare training.