ENHANCING MEN’S AWARENESS OF TESTICULAR DISORDERS (E-MAT) USING A VIRTUAL REALITY INTERVENTION: A PRE-POST STUDY

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BACKGROUND
- Testicular cancer (TC) is the most common solid tumour among men aged 18 to 50 years.\(^b\)
- The incidence of benign testicular disorders (e.g. testicular torsion, epididymitis, and orchitis) is higher than that of TC.
- Men’s awareness of diseases of the testes is lacking and their intentions to seek help for testicular symptoms are low.
- We interviewed men about their preferred strategies for learning about testicular disorders and designed E-MAT accordingly.
- Men recommended strategies that are:

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<th>VISUALLY STIMULATING</th>
<th>BRIEF</th>
<th>POSITIVELY WORDED</th>
<th>USING LIGHT LANGUAGE</th>
<th>DELIVERED FREQUENTLY</th>
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AIM
The aim of this one-group pre-post study was to enhance men’s awareness of testicular disorders, improve their help-seeking intentions for testicular symptoms, and increase their intention and behaviour to feel their testes.

INTERVENTION
E-MAT was developed in the form of a virtual reality experience with three levels:
- Virtual reality headset used
- Controller with haptic feedback used

THE LEVELS IN E-MAT
Level I
Men were asked to familiarise themselves with the normal testes and common testicular symptoms
Level II
Men were exposed to a 3D model of real testes and were asked to identify the most common disorders (testicular torsion, epididymitis, and TC)
Level III
Information from the first two level were reiterated and the importance of early help-seeking was stressed

DATA COLLECTION
Males, residing in the Republic of Ireland, and aged 18-50 years were recruited from a university
A questionnaire was completed at baseline (n=53)
Participants (n=53) were exposed to the intervention
A questionnaire was completed immediately post-test (n=53)
A questionnaire was completed one month post-test (n=49)

FINDINGS
At post-test, there was increase in:
1) Knowledge and awareness of the normal testes, testicular symptoms, and disorders.
2) Intentions to feel own testes and advise other men to feel their own testes.
3) Intentions to seek help for swelling, lumpiness, and pain.
4) Behaviour in relation to feeling own testes and advising other men to do the same.

| 11 (22.4%) participants did not intend to feel their testes at baseline |
| Of those, 6 (54.5%) reported having done that one month later (p=0.019) |
| 32 (65.3%) participants did not intend to advise other men to feel their own testes at baseline |
| Of those, 8 (25%) reported having done that one month later (p<0.001) |

CONCLUSION
- Full-scale testing and public dissemination of E-MAT are recommended.
- Virtual reality can be used in various health contexts.

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References available upon request.