

## Virtual reality is being used as an alternative to opioids to manage pain in admitted hospital patients. This recent success story shows how it may help when nothing else does.

Ms. Vasquez came into the hospital in an incredible amount of debilitating pain. Her doctor, a leading gastroenterologist and Director of Cedars-Sinai Health Services Research — Dr. Brennan Spiegel — tried to find the cause of her abdominal pain. As with many chronic gastrointestinal issues and after multiple tests, Dr. Spiegel could not determine the specific source of Ms. Vasquez's pain. The most he could do was help her manage it.

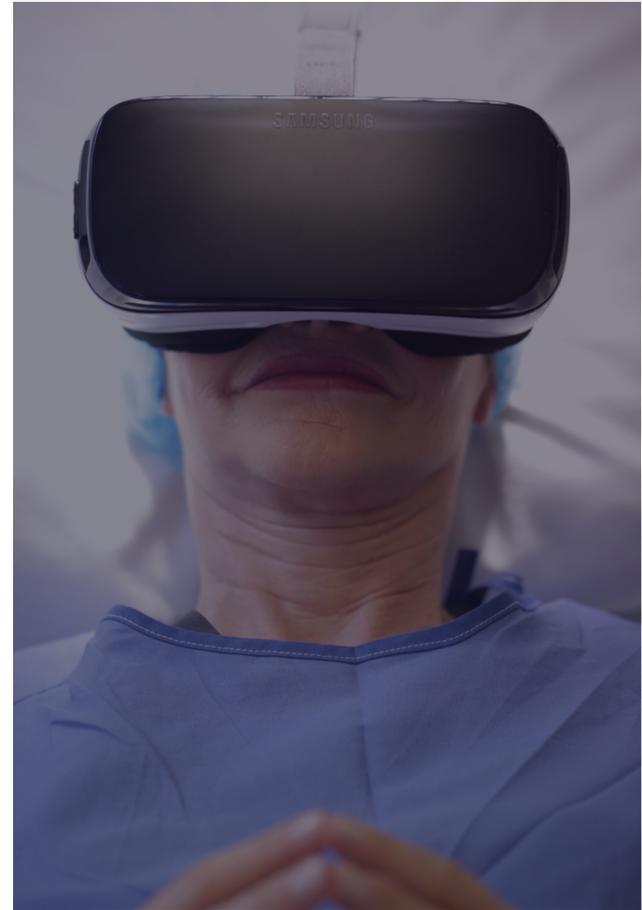
In an attempt to reduce her discomfort, Dr. Spiegel prescribed Ms. Vasquez opioids but the painkillers were unsuccessful and the negative side effects — fatigue, confusion, constipation and drowsiness — frustrated Ms. Vasquez. Dr. Spiegel then escalated opioid therapy and prescribed a Ketamine drip, a powerful anesthetic typically used before surgeries. Despite the increased strength of the drug therapies, Ms. Vasquez experienced little relief and still remained in severe pain.

### A Non-Opioid Approach Without Side Effects

As a last ditch effort, her medical team suggested using virtual reality as they had learned about clinical research completed at Cedars-Sinai which showed a decrease in pain scores after a virtual reality intervention. Ms. Vasquez's doctors felt the non-opioid treatment was worth a try to alleviate some of her discomfort. Ms. Vasquez agreed to the treatment, and her doctors called what happened next "...the closest thing to a miraculous response..." they have seen.

Minutes after beginning the virtual reality experience, Ms. Vasquez was crying tears of joy because of the highly effective relief she finally experienced. She was stunned, as was Dr. Spiegel, who stated, "In my 18 years of practicing medicine, I have never seen a more immediate and effective response to a prescribed therapy."

While the virtual reality therapy did not remedy Ms. Vasquez's chronic condition and she still had extensive treatment to be done, her doctors were excited to see she was healing much faster than anyone originally expected. Not only was she in a better physical state, but Ms. Vasquez was in a better mood. She was discharged from the hospital the next morning, shortening her stay and saving the hospital expensive inpatient resources. She looked forward to continuing her recovery outside the hospital, which would include virtual reality therapy.



Note: Patient name has been changed to maintain confidentiality.