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## VIRTUETHIC

### The Promise and Perils of Virtual Reality in Forensic Mental Health: Charting a Path Towards Ethical Guidelines

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Virtual Reality (VR) applications can be used in psychological or psychiatric treatment. In virtual computer-generated worlds, people can make new experiences. Although people know that they are in a simulation, they nevertheless have the feeling that they are present in that environment. Our environment influences our thinking, feeling, and behavior. This effect can be used in therapy: VR enables therapists to influence people and elicit reactions from them. The possibilities of using VR in psychiatry are currently being tested in research. One subfield is forensic psychiatry, which treats and rehabilitates persons with mental health problems who committed a crime. It seems probable that the first VR treatments to prevent aggression will soon be ripe for introduction into forensic practice. This raises numerous ethical and legal questions that need to be addressed. The interdisciplinary consortium will provide answers to these questions in close collaboration with forensic clinicians from around the globe and with people detained in forensic settings. Both groups will be interviewed several times and asked for their views on controversial matters. Combined with the findings of our conceptual, ethical, and legal analyses, this will lead to the world's first set of

ethical guidelines for using VR in forensic treatment.

