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“Stanford allows me to have a relationship with many technological companies”

Dr. Walter Greenleaf describes what it is like to work at this university and how virtual and augmented reality can be applied in the medical field

The next generation of virtual and augmented reality technology will be able to enhance clinical care and to improve personal health and wellness. It will also help facilitate the shift towards telemedicine so as to reduce costs of care delivery and raise clinical efficiency. We interview Dr. Walter Greenleaf, research neuroscientist and medical product developer working at Stanford University, during his recent visit to IMDEA Networks.

Dr. Greenleaf is a leading authority in the field of digital medicine and medical virtual reality and he has implemented this technology to treat Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, Anxiety Disorders, Stroke, Addictions, Autism, and other difficult problems in behavioral and physical medicine.

What is the essence of your work?

I'm a research scientist, a neuroscientist working at Stanford University and one of the things that I'm most excited about is how new technology is allowing us to do more things in healthcare. I work on using virtual reality technology to help with a number of different healthcare problems such as helping with stroke rehabilitation, helping with stress, depression and other major healthcare problems.

What enriches you the most from working at Stanford?

My work at Stanford University is focused on some basic research on how virtual reality environments can have an impact on healthcare. However, one of the wonderful things of being located at that university is it allows me to have a relationship with many technological companies that are also developing next generation technology for education, for healthcare, for training. And it's a fertile ground to have that collaboration between an academic research center and the groups that are out there developing the next generation of products will affect your life.

Can you give some specific examples of expected real-world implementations and use cases?

Right now, virtual reality and augmented reality is moving away from the academic research centers like my university and is already been used for clinical care. We're using it to help people who have anxiety disorders, learn the skills to calm down, and to help people with fears of heights, of flying master those fears... We are also using the technology to help people who have had a stroke recover from it and being able to get back to their activities of life or back to their job. I think the other exciting area is using the virtual reality technology to help people who have stress or anxiety learn the skills to manage those situations.

What will be the future of this technology?

It's very exciting to see that the technology which is available now, that we can buy at an electronic store can do so many amazing things. However, we are still waiting for the research groups and the products developments groups to build it out and allow this very powerful technology to do some much more for us. I think that in the next five years we will start seeing more things that are useful in our work environment, our education environment and our healthcare environment. After that, probably in the next ten years we will star seeing it being part of the way that we all work together, socialize together, and how we are entertained, how we communicate, but in a way that isn't limiting.

I think right now we use technology by texting and by typing, and by using Skype phone calls to connect with each other, but it has a very narrow limit to what we can do. What's exciting about the evolution of 5G technology, the evolution of virtual world technology, the evolution of improving display technology is it soon it will be a more robust way for us to work as groups, to have fun with our friends, to connect with family members but in a much richer and deep way than the current way that we interact with our friends, family and our machines.

Source(s): IMDEA Networks Institute

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***Some keywords that define us:** 5G, Big Data, blockchains and distributed ledgers, cloud computing, content-delivery networks, data analytics, energy-efficient networks, fog and edge computing, indoor positioning, Internet of Things (IoT), machine learning, millimeter-wave communication, mobile computing, network economics, network measurements, network security, networked systems, network protocols and algorithms, network virtualization (software defined networks – SDN and network function virtualization – NFV), privacy, social networks, underwater networks, vehicular networks, wireless networks and more...*

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