

7TH PORTUGUESE AUDIOLOGY CONFERENCE AND 11TH WORKSHOP OF THE ESS-P.PORTO

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Report

Last year's 7th Portuguese Audiology Conference and 11th Workshop, held at the School of Health, Polytechnic of Porto, Portugal, was entitled "Audiology in the Digital Era", reflecting the boom in the application of technology and software in clinical and daily life.

In the morning, structured sessions were organized by subjects such as hearing rehabilitation, with speakers from different companies (Dr João Januário, Widex; Dr Orlando Faria, Unitron; Dr Vitor Jesus, Evollu). They addressed new diagnosis criteria, programming, digital hearing aid advances, and hearables technology. In the afternoon, the main subject was vestibular rehabilitation, giving new insights into vestibular diagnosis (Dr Rosmaninho Seabra) and a new vision of assessing vestibular loss/function with the demonstration of the ICS Video Head Impulse Test (Dr Silvester Feijoo, Natus).

Later the 11th workshop took place, this year entitled "Virtual Reality in Healthcare", presented by Prof. António Marques. Portugal faces a demographic challenge caused by an ageing population and falling birth rates. Many degenerative conditions and diseases of ageing can be chronic and challenging to treat, and can prevent otherwise healthy individuals from working and contributing fully to society. Without effective intervention and treatment, many sufferers will find themselves unable to work and be socially isolated. This puts strain on the healthcare system and causes a significant increase in health costs.

Advances in technology can offer solutions to manage these conditions and minimise their impact on quality of life. Virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) are two emerging technologies which are becoming part of the healthcare industry. VR is a computer technology that can simulate 3D interactive virtual environments to provide a real-life sensory experience in which an individual can manipulate virtual objects and perform tasks. AR is a resource where elements from real life are augmented by additional visual information. From medical training to diagnosis and therapeutic interventions, VR and AR are having a significant impact on the healthcare sector, making it more efficient and precise. The workshop provided a brief introduction to VR/AR technology, examined the specific benefits VR/AR offers consumers and providers of health and rehabilitation services, and discussed potential areas of application, particularly in audiology.

The closing ceremony ended with the best poster award to "Hearing loss and loneliness: effects of hearing aid adoption" by T. Marques and A. Carvalho. The study confirmed that auditory rehabilitation reduced loneliness in individuals with presbycusis ($n = 36$; aged 65 and over). There was a significant decrease in the perception of loneliness after the adoption of a hearing aid ($p = 0.020$).



A workshop participant experiences VR



Thanks to the organizing committee (from left to right): Paula Lopes, David Tomé, Beatriz Martins, Juliana Ferreira, João Mesquita, João Pacheco, Ricardo Baptista, Tetyana Trofymets, Márcia Fernandes, Ana Sofia Silva, Cátia Santos, Ana Isabel Pinto, Sara Alves, Rita Mendes, Catarina Silva, Ana Inês Ferreira, Anabela Domingues, Tânia Carvalho, Ana Catarina Barbosa.