



FEATURE ARTICLE FROM ALWAYS BEST CARE

Diet and Exercise for Seniors

Video games are not just for kids and teenagers any longer. Seniors and the disabled populations are fast becoming the focused users of video game technology. The invention of motion sensor controller-free games has changed the way physical therapy and fitness programs are used for these groups. The technology uses a sensing system and the user only has to stand and move in front of it. The system provides immediate feedback to the person playing the game, showing how well the user is following the movements on the screen.

The technology as a whole has a big future for the senior industry. According to [Aging in Place Technology](#), “It’s a user interface that begs to be applied to caregiving, family communication and home health applications.”

This new gaming category has garnered its own term – exergaming – which defines video games that are also a form of exercise. It is recognized for reversing the stereotype that gaming is a sedentary activity by promoting an active lifestyle. First introduced in 2003, Bill Gates and Microsoft presented a video game that included a bike. Since then, video games in this special class have generated a lot of interest in the health care and senior wellness sectors. It will continue to gain a reputation for promoting positive rehabilitation results and good health for seniors.

Companies like [Log-Tek USA](#) have taken the Kinect technology and developed a functional tool specifically for physical therapists and occupational therapists to use with patients. This tool is called [SHAPES](#), Spatially and Human Aware Performance Evaluation System.

SHAPES requires an Internet connection for both patient and therapist. The system allows a therapist to record multiple full-bodied motion therapy sessions to model exercises for either a group of patients or customize a session for an individual patient. The patient stands in front of the sensor device, starts the video session that was recorded by the therapist, and performs the exercises that are on the screen. The patient’s performance is captured in the system as he is following the session on the screen. SHAPES provides real-time feedback to the patient about how accurate he is in completing the exercise and also stores the data for later analysis by the therapist. Once the therapist has reviewed and evaluated the data from a remote location, he can make adjustments to the routine by updating the video session or make recommendations for improving the exercise session based on that data.

The real-time accuracy feedback by SHAPES ensures that the patient understands the exercises he is performing while he is participating. He can correct improper form during the session, which supports proper execution of the exercises even without the therapist in the room. The patient is assured personal attention and support for their recovery needs because both the patient and therapist can track progress toward a recovery goal and identify areas of difficulty in performing exercises.

Another company, [GestureTek](#), offers its Interactive Rehabilitation and Exercise System (IREX), which places patients into a therapist-prescribed exercise regime through virtual sport or gaming environments where they encounter on-screen images and objects that are “designed to enhance the sense of ‘presence’ for the patient.” Real-time visual and auditory feedback provide increased stimulation for the patient. The

therapists can customize a fun and interactive exercise program that tests and strengthens single joints, combined joint movements, or full body function, improving range and control of motion and balance.

The Kinect technology provides seniors with an entertaining way of staying active and engaging in therapy, which will encourage them to participate and follow through on the prescribed therapy. Whether in their own homes or at a care facility, seniors will benefit from the easy access and the simplicity of this method and have opportunity for improved health.

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