Abbott Launches First Optical Coherence Tomography Virtual Reality Training Program For Cardiologists

Virtual reality training improved cath lab staff learning engagement by 45% and knowledge retention by 72%

87% of studies show higher medical accuracy in medical practice by those trained with virtual reality

ABBOTT PARK, Ill., Dec. 9, 2020 — Abbott today announced the global release of its first virtual reality-based training program designed to change how interventional cardiologists are trained in using optical coherence tomography (OCT) imaging technology. The comprehensive new training program incorporates virtual reality (VR) with traditional training techniques to increase experience and expertise in using Abbott's OCT imaging and improve outcomes in patients needing a stent to open clogged arteries.

Abbott is expanding its training portfolio to help physicians gain experience with new therapy options, imaging and diagnostic tools to help improve patient outcomes. Virtual reality presents a promising approach to OCT training because it enables physicians to have the full experience of being in the catheterization laboratory by putting them in the "driver's seat" with imaging technology.

OCT is an intracoronary imaging platform offered by Abbott that helps physicians view and assess coronary arteries from*inside* the vessel with high precision. This view allows for an improved look at the nature of a patient's coronary artery disease to improve treatment decisions and the quality of stent deployment. Recent data show that in 88% of Percutaneous Coronary Intervention (PCI) procedures[1] managed with OCT workflow, physician decision-making changed compared with initial, angiographically-guided strategy, demonstrating that OCT imaging can help to drive better clinical outcomes. Training remains critical to ensuring physicians and hospitals can best utilize the technology to optimize patients' results.

"It's undeniable that OCT imaging technology is unlocking new opportunities to improve outcomes for our patients. Abbott's new VR training program has provided my team the experience of being in the cath lab and understanding OCT technology quickly and efficiently," said Vamsi Krishna, M.D., director, Ascension, Seton Hays Medical Center. "The OCT VR program enhances training for OCT imaging technology through innovative educational programs. Virtual reality is truly the next wave of training that will ultimately improve patient outcomes and I'm very excited to be a part of the new program."

Virtual Reality eliminates barriers for cardiologists to improve cardiovascular health and increase competency of technology

Abbott's new OCT virtual reality-based training programs, powered by Oculus Go™, will dramatically enhance decision-making for physicians who utilize OCT instead of angiography. The training is based on the comprehensive OCT experience and input from Richard A. Shlofmitz, M.D., FACC, chairman of cardiology at St. Francis Hospital, The Heart Center, and the success he found in translating new training concepts into improvements in patient care. As a result, Abbott is leveraging technology that has been found to increase training success dramatically. In fact, higher accuracy in medical practice was shown in 87% of studies[2] by those trained with virtual reality versus traditional techniques. According to Abbott research, virtual reality techniques improved cath lab staff learning engagement by 45%[3] and knowledge retention by 72%[4].

"Abbott's new OCT training enables interventional cardiologists to receive more in-depth, experiential training to encourage more precise diagnoses, while healthcare systems will experience cost savings through a reduction in the number of staff training courses needed," said Harvinder Singh, vice president, global commercial operations of Abbott's vascular business. "Furthermore, the virtual reality training program will not only enhance accuracy to improve patient outcomes, but it also furthers the industry's adoption of innovative technologies in healthcare."

"Virtual reality-based training programs are truly changing the way interventional cardiologists learn and adopt new technologies, such as OCT, that are helping physicians make better decisions in the cath lab," said Nick West, M.D., divisional vice president, medical affairs, and chief medical officer of Abbott's vascular business. "The program is also furthering Abbott's ability to use technology and innovations to drive better patient outcomes."

About Abbott
Abbott is a global healthcare leader that helps people live more fully at all stages of life. Our portfolio of life-changing technologies spans the spectrum of healthcare, with leading businesses and products in diagnostics, medical devices, nutritionals and branded generic medicines. Our 107,000 colleagues serve people in more than 160 countries.

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[1] https://abbott.mediaroom.com/2020-06-26-New-Research-Finds-Abbotts-Optical-Coherence-Tomography-Imaging-Changed-Treatment-Decisions-in-88-of-Artery-Blockages

[2] https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6039818/

[3] https://www.jmir.org/2019/1/e12959/

[4] https://www.jmir.org/2019/1/e12959/