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SimCoach

In response to health care challenges that the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan have placed on the population of service members and their families, the U.S. Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury (DCoE) have funded development of an intelligent, interactive, online virtual human healthcare guide program currently referred to as SimCoach.

The SimCoach project is developing virtual human support agents to serve as online guides for assisting military personnel and family members in breaking down barriers to initiating the healthcare process. The SimCoach experience is designed to attract and engage military Service Members, Veterans, and their significant others who might not otherwise seek help. It aims to motivate users to take the first step and seek information and advice with regard to their healthcare (e.g. psychological health, traumatic brain injury, addiction, etc.), and their general personal welfare (i.e., other non-medical stressors such as economic or transition issues). If determined necessary, SimCoach will also encourage them to take the next step towards seeking more traditional resources available. The SimCoach project is not conceived to deliver diagnosis or treatment, or as a replacement for human providers and experts.

SimCoach will allow users to engage in a dialog about their healthcare concerns with an interactive virtual human, selected from a variety of character options. He or she will answer direct questions and guide the user through a sequence of user-specific exercises and assessments. These characters are designed to solicit basic anonymous background information about the user's history and clinical/psychosocial concerns. With this information they can provide advice and support, direct the user to relevant online content, and potentially facilitate the process of seeking appropriate care with a live clinical provider.

Facts and Figures

- SimCoach is ICT's first web based interactive virtual human.
- SimCoach has been incorporated into the Braveheart website (braveheartveterans.org), a veteran support initiative of the Atlanta Braves and Emory University.