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Virtual reality in medical students' education: A scoping review protocol

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Virtual reality in medical students' education: A scoping review protocol

Jiang Haowen¹, Sunitha Vimalesvaran¹, Bhone Myint Kyaw², Lorainne Tudor Car^{2, 3}

Abstract

Background: Virtual reality (VR) is a technology that produces a virtual manifestation of the real world. In recent years, VR has been increasingly used as a tool in medical education. The use of VR in medical education has large potential, as it allows for distance learning and training which may be challenging to deliver in real life. VR encompasses different tools and applications. There is a need to explore how VR has been employed in medical education to date.

Objective: The objective of this scoping review is to conceptualise the VR tools available and the applications of VR in undergraduate medical education as reported in the literature. This scoping review will identify any gaps in this field and provide suggestions for future research.

Methods and analysis: The relevant studies will be examined using the Joanna Briggs institute methodological framework for scoping studies. A comprehensive search from a total of 6 electronic databases and grey literature sources will be performed. The reference list of included studies will be screened for additional studies. The screening and data extraction will be done in parallel and independently by two review authors. Any discrepancies will be resolved through consensus or discussion with a third review author. A data extraction form has been developed using key themes from the research questions. The extracted data will be qualitatively analysed and presented in a diagrammatic or tabular form, alongside a narrative summary, in line with PRISMA-ScR reporting guidelines.

Ethics and dissemination: All data will be collected from published and grey literature. Ethics approval is therefore not a requirement. We will present our findings at relevant conferences and submit them for publications in peer-reviewed journals.

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Strengths and limitations of this study

- A systematic and comprehensive search of electronic databases and grey literature sources will be performed to identify all available evidence on the use of VR in medical students' education.
- As this is a scoping review, a formal quality and risk of bias assessment of the included studies will not be performed.
- Only studies published in English will be included.

Background

The demand for healthcare and healthcare professionals is rising around the world. By the year 2030, the global economy is projected to create 40 million new healthcare jobs, and yet at present there remains a shortage of 18 million healthcare workers¹. One factor contributing to this shortage has been a lack of effective medical education. Medical education today comprises of both classroom theoretical learning as well as hospital-based learning where students are able to gain clinical experience. However, the hospital model has been criticised as being too expensive and impractical². To solve this problem, digital education has been seen as a promising way to deliver effective medical education. Digital education (also known as electronic education or e-learning) is defined as the act of teaching and learning via digital technologies. It is a broad term that encompasses a large number of methods, from a simple conversion of a book into PDF format to complex modalities such as mobile learning or mobile digital education, virtual patients, virtual reality, serious gaming and gamification, massive open online courses, and digital psychomotor skills trainers³. While there is wide array of digital education tools available, in this scoping review we will be focusing on investigating one of the modalities, virtual reality.

Virtual reality (VR) is defined as an educational tool that uses computer technology to create a three-dimensional (3D) image or environment that can be interacted in a seemingly real or physical way⁴. VR is a broad concept that has many different tools and applications. There are three main categories of VR simulators; namely screen-based VR, immersive VR environments, and virtual worlds⁵. Screen-based VR consist of an interface connected to mechanical devices or haptic units, and can be displayed on any screen but most commonly using a desktop⁶. This sort of VR has commonly been used to develop technical psychomotor skills, such as for endoscopic surgery, due to the fact that it can be used repeatedly and require very little time to set up⁷. Immersive VR refers to a user in a virtual environment during which time his or her awareness of the real world is disconnected⁸. This is most commonly done with the help of VR head-mounted displays (HMDs), such as Oculus Rift or HTC Vive⁹. This

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3 can be further classified into high-end VR (use of dedicated controllers, eg. Oculus Rift, HTC
4 Vive), mobile VR (use of a magnetic switch, eg. Google cardboard, Samsung Gear), or
5 enhanced VR (a combination of HMDs with data gloves or bodysuits) ⁹. It has been shown
6 that immersive VR is associated with learners being more engaged, and acquired better
7 cognitive, psychomotor, and affective skills ¹⁰, but immersive VR lacks significant application
8 in medical education to date, possibly due to the high cost of immersive VR that makes it
9 impractical. Virtual worlds are 3D virtual environments based on multiplayer online gaming,
10 freeing users from the constraints of location or time. The use of virtual worlds representing a
11 clinical setting has been used in training emergency personnel on the management of mass-
12 casualty or major incident situations ¹¹⁻¹³. Avatars can be generated representing patients,
13 which provides a more realistic simulation for the user ¹⁴.

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21 The use of VR in medical education can be applied in to two major areas. The first
22 pertains to the use of VR to develop technical competencies, such as procedural skills or those
23 that require extensive 3D visualisation. Examples of its applications has been in areas such
24 as the learning of anatomy, surgical procedures, and key skills such as cardiopulmonary
25 resuscitation (CPR) ¹⁵⁻¹⁸. Tools used in teaching of such skills involves mainly the use of
26 screen-based VR for surgical procedures and 3D visualisation ^{17,19}, and the use of virtual
27 worlds for training of responses to stressful situations, such as CPR or emergency department
28 (ED) situations ^{12,18}. A second, less well-researched area, involves using VR to teach 'soft
29 skills', such as empathy and communication skills with patients ^{14,20,21}. This commonly involves
30 the use of avatars (virtual patients) that respond in a certain way for users to communicate
31 with ²⁰. Considering the wide diversity of skills that can be practised with VR, coupled with the
32 widespread reach and convenience of digital education, this could be a very powerful
33 educational tool for medical students.

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41 Given the wide array of tools available in the VR toolbox, as well as the diverse areas
42 that VR can be applied to, there is a need to systematically identify the current VR applications
43 available and in use for medical education, as well as identify which aspects of medical
44 education could stand to benefit from VR, as reported in the literature.

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While there are reviews aiming to map different applications of VR is used in nursing
and dentistry education, there seem to be none focusing on medical students' education. ^{22,23}.
Existing systematic reviews on virtual reality in medical education mainly assess the
effectiveness of VR within different surgical disciplines ^{19,24}. This scoping review will instead
adopt a much broader focus, by mapping out the extent of VR applications rather than focusing
on the effectiveness of VR in a particular discipline.

Objectives

The objective of this scoping review is to identify the different VR tools and applications in undergraduate medical education as reported in the literature. This scoping review also aims to identify any gaps in the current literature and provide suggestions for future research on the use of VR in medical education.

Methods

The proposed scoping review will be conducted in accordance with the JBI methodology for scoping reviews²⁵. This comprises of six stages: (1) identifying the research question; (2) identifying relevant studies; (3) study selection; (4) charting the data; (5) collating, summarizing and reporting the results; and (6) stakeholder consultation. The protocol was registered on the Open Science Framework (OSF)²⁶.

Stage 1: Identifying the research question

The objective of this scoping review is to outline the different VR modes available and the applications of VR in undergraduate medical education. In line with the objectives of this scoping review, we have developed the following research questions:

1. How is VR used in undergraduate medical education?
2. What are the main features of the VR applications in undergraduate medical education?
3. What VR tools are available for undergraduate medical education?
4. Which aspects of undergraduate medical education has VR been applied to?

Stage 2: Identifying relevant studies

A comprehensive search of the literature will be done using the following electronic databases: MEDLINE (Ovid), EMBASE (Elsevier), Cochrane Central Register of Controlled Trials (CENTRAL) (Wiley), Educational Resource Information Centre (ERIC) (Ovid). Grey literature will be searched for through Google Scholar. As a first step, a limited search using keywords is conducted in the databases of MEDLINE. The search strategy will be piloted to check appropriateness of keywords and databases. In all retrieved papers, an analysis of the words contained within the title and abstracts, as well as index terms will be done to develop a full search strategy. Thereafter, a second search using all the identified keywords and index terms will be done across all databases. Lastly, the third step will include screening of the reference lists of all studies selected for this scoping review to look for additional sources. A preliminary version of the MEDLINE search can be found in Appendix 1, which was developed with the help of a medical librarian experienced in the field. The search strategy will include year 2010

to present. We aim to start from 2010 as most literature pertaining to VR for education has been in recent years²⁷. We will search for literature in the English language only. All references identified will be imported into the reference manager software, EndNote X9. The references from different electronic databases will be combined and any duplicate records will be removed.

Stage 3: Study selection

The study selection will follow a two-step screening process, consisting of a title and abstract screening, followed by a full-text review. In both steps, two independent reviews (JHW, SV) will screen the articles against the eligibility criteria. Any disagreements will be discussed, and if no consensus can be reached a third reviewer (BMK) will be consulted. We will consider eligible studies based on the criteria in Table 1.

Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Studies on undergraduate medical students in any geographical setting. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Studies focusing only on virtual patient simulation; AR; MR; or serious gaming; without any involvement of VR.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Studies on VR used in undergraduate medical education. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Studies published before 2010.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Studies involving the use of VR together with another modality, such as immersive VR, VR-based serious gaming, VR-based virtual patients. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Studies in languages other than English.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All primary studies, regardless of study design, and relevant systematic reviews. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opinion pieces, viewpoints and conceptual frameworks, conference abstracts

Table 1. Full inclusion and exclusion criteria.

The first step involves the screening of the title and abstract of the references using the reference manager software, EndNote X9. In order to qualify for the full-text scan, the title and abstract must: i) focus on the use of VR for educational use only, ii) have medical students as a target population. Virtual patients, i.e. computer-generated programs that simulates real-life clinical scenarios, can also be delivered in a VR format. In this scoping review, VR-based virtual patients will be included. We will also include studies on VR-based serious gaming

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3 education. Augmented reality (AR; superimposed VR onto the real-world environment)²³ and
4 mixed reality (MR; mixing of both virtual and digital elements, allowing one to interact with both
5 simultaneously)²⁸ are distinct entities that make use of VR and are not classified as VR.
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7 Studies focussing solely on MR/AR will also be excluded from this review.
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9 We will consider all primary studies, which includes experimental, observational, and
10 qualitative study designs. Systematic reviews will also be considered. The full-texts of the
11 included studies will be retrieved and their citation details imported. Studies excluded at this
12 stage will be described in the “Characteristics of excluded studies” table, where reasons for
13 exclusion will be noted. This process follows the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic
14 Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines²⁹, which is depicted in Figure 1. Two
15 review authors (JHW, SV) will verify the final list of included studies.
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22 Stage 4: Charting the data

23 Relevant data will be extracted from all included studies in the scoping review by two
24 independent reviewers (JHW, SV). A structured data recording form developed by the
25 reviewers will be used and the information recorded on Microsoft Excel®. The extracted data
26 includes details on the author; year of publication; title; type of study; country of study; WHO
27 income level of country; objective of study; number of participants; year of study; type of VR
28 used; VR mode, equipment used; subject taught; revised subject; duration of use; frequency
29 of use; individual/group delivery; extent of immersion; extent of interactivity. A draft the data
30 extraction tool is included in Appendix 2. The draft data extraction tool will be piloted and
31 revised as necessary during the process of extracting data from each study. Any disagreement
32 that arises between reviewers will be resolved through discussion and a third review author
33 (BMK) will act as an arbiter when disagreements cannot be resolved. We will contact the study
34 authors for any missing or incomplete data.
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45 Stage 5: Collating, summarising and reporting the results (results same as data 46 extracted)

47 To characterize and summarize the results, a map of the data extracted from the included
48 papers will be presented in a diagrammatic or tabular form. In alignment with the objective of
49 this study, we will provide an overview of the target participants, content of VR programs,
50 types of studies included and the context of each included study. The tabulated and/or charted
51 results will be accompanied by a narrative summary, which will describe how the results meet
52 the objectives and aims of this scoping review. We will report findings in line with the “Preferred
53 Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis: extension for Scoping Reviews
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3 (PRISMA-ScR)" checklist³⁰. Gap identification will detect areas where there is paucity of data
4 on VR content and its application in undergraduate medical education.
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8 Step 6: Stakeholder consultation

9 A stakeholder consultation is planned to validate the findings from the review, add new
10 insights, and identify gaps for further research. Stakeholders will include researchers
11 experienced in the field of medical education and digital health professions education. We will
12 present our findings and collate their views and feedback. Their feedback will be incorporated
13 into how we present our final manuscript.
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18 **Discussion**

19 Our scoping review will aim to provide insight into the existing evidence as well as gaps on
20 the use of VR in medical education and provide recommendations for future research in this
21 area. By exploring the current tools of VR used in medical application, we can identify areas
22 which may have untapped potential. We can also identify aspects of medical education (e.g.
23 training of certain skills) which do not have any literature regarding the use of VR, thus
24 representing a potential area of research. We will also show whether different tools of VR have
25 been used in the same aspect of medical education, and if so future research could investigate
26 the efficacy of the difference tools within the same sphere.
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36 **Patient and public involvement**

37 Patients and the public were not involved.
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43 **Author Contributions**

44 LTC conceived the idea for the review. JHW and SV wrote the review protocol. LTC and BMK
45 provided methodological guidance and critically revised the protocol.
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52 search strategy for MEDLINE.
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Conflicts of Interest

None declared.

Ethics approval

Future disseminations related to this work will include the publication of the results in a peer-reviewed journal and presentations at conferences.

Provenance and peer review

Not commissioned; externally peer reviewed.

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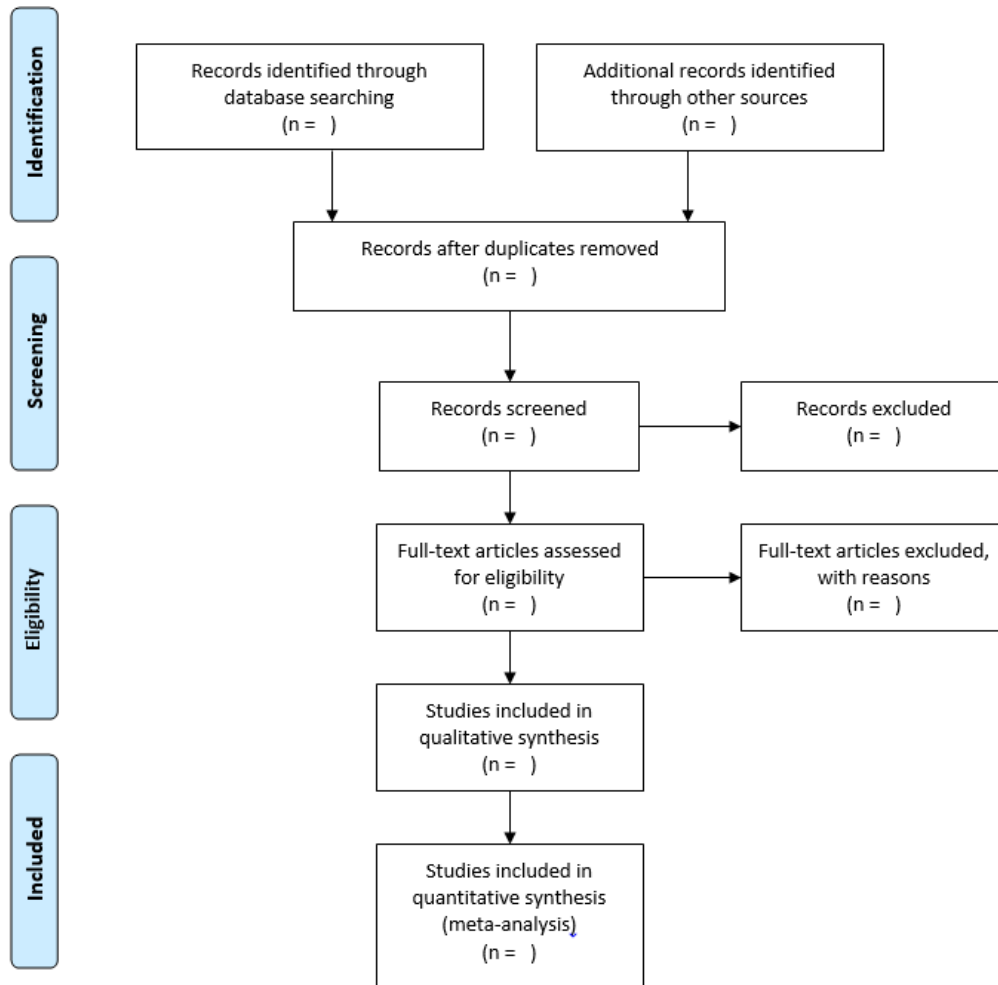


Figure 1. Flow diagram of study selection process, as depicted by the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines.

Appendices

Appendix I: Search strategy for MEDLINE

1. exp Virtual Reality/
2. User-computer interface/
3. Computer Simulation/
4. Computer-Assisted Instruction/
5. ((simulat* or virtual realit* or virtual reality simulat* or virtual reality environment* or VRE or three-dimension* or 3D or immersive virtual realit* or immersive VR or HMD* or head-mounted display* or virtual world* or avatar* or virtual patient* or VR room*).mp.
6. 1 or 2 or 3 or 4 or 5
7. exp Education, Medical, Undergraduate/
8. Educational technology/
9. Clinical competence/
10. Educational measurement/
11. Problem-Based Learning/
12. Simulation Training/
13. Education/
14. Teaching/
15. Learning/
16. Curriculum/
17. (educat* or learn* or train* or instruct* or teach*).mp.
18. 7 or 8 or 9 or 10 or 11 or 12 or 13 or 14 or 15 or 16 or 17
19. exp Students, Medical/
20. (medical student* or medical undergraduate* or pre-registrat*).mp.

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Appendix II: Data extraction form

Category	Type of Data
1. Bibliographic information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Author b. Year of publication c. Country of study <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Region ii) WHO Income level d. Aims of study
2. Information relating to the inclusion criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Population <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Number of students ii) Year of study b. Setting
3. Information relating to the study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Type of VR <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) 3D VR ii) VRE iii) VR with head-mounted display iv) VR simulators b. VR mode c. Equipment used <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Input device ii) Output device

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">d. Subject taughte. Revised subjectf. Duration of use of VRg. Frequency of use of VRh. Individual / group deliveryi. Extent of Immersionj. Extent of Interactivity |
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Virtual reality in medical students' education: A scoping review protocol

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Virtual reality in medical students' education: A scoping review protocol

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Keywords: Education, Medical; Virtual Reality; Students, Medical, Digital health education.

Word count: 2799

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Virtual reality in medical students' education: A scoping review protocol

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Abstract

Background: Virtual reality (VR) is a technology that produces a virtual manifestation of the real world. In recent years, VR has been increasingly used as a tool in medical education. The use of VR in medical education has large potential, as it allows for distance learning and training which may be challenging to deliver in real life. VR encompasses different tools and applications. There is a need to explore how VR has been employed in medical education to date.

Objective: The objective of this scoping review is to conceptualise the VR tools available and the applications of VR in undergraduate medical education as reported in the literature. This scoping review will identify any gaps in this field and provide suggestions for future research.

Methods and analysis: The relevant studies will be examined using the Joanna Briggs institute methodological framework for scoping studies. A comprehensive search from a total of 6 electronic databases and grey literature sources will be performed. The reference list of included studies will be screened for additional studies. The screening and data extraction will be done in parallel and independently by two review authors. Any discrepancies will be resolved through consensus or discussion with a third review author. A data extraction form has been developed using key themes from the research questions. The extracted data will be qualitatively analysed and presented in a diagrammatic or tabular form, alongside a narrative summary, in line with PRISMA-ScR reporting guidelines.

Ethics and dissemination: All data will be collected from published and grey literature. Ethics approval is therefore not a requirement. We will present our findings at relevant conferences and submit them for publications in peer-reviewed journals.

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Strengths and limitations of this study

- A systematic and comprehensive search of electronic databases and grey literature sources will ensure that all available evidence is identified.
- The scoping review will strictly follow the Joanna Briggs Institute methodology for scoping reviews.
- A stakeholder consultation will allow us to further validate the findings and address potential gaps in the paper.
- A formal assessment of the quality of evidence will not be performed and this may lead to some studies of poor quality being included.
- Only studies written in English and published after 2010 will be included.

Background

The demand for healthcare and healthcare professionals is rising around the world. By the year 2030, the global economy is projected to create 40 million new healthcare jobs, and yet at present there remains a shortage of 18 million healthcare workers¹. One factor contributing to this shortage has been a lack of effective undergraduate or pre-registration medical education, which is defined as any type of initial study that leads to a medical degree that is recognised by relevant governments, and enables entry to the health-care workforce². Medical education today comprises of both classroom theoretical learning as well as hospital-based learning where students are able to gain clinical experience. However, the hospital model has been criticised as being too expensive and impractical³. To solve this problem, digital education has been seen as a promising way to deliver effective medical education. Digital education (also known as electronic education or e-learning) is defined as the act of teaching and learning via digital technologies⁴. It is a broad term that encompasses a large number of methods, from a simple conversion of a book into PDF format to complex modalities such as mobile learning or mobile digital education, virtual patients, virtual reality, serious gaming and gamification, massive open online courses, and digital psychomotor skills trainers⁵. While there is wide array of digital education tools available, in this scoping review we will be focusing on investigating one of the modalities, virtual reality.

Virtual reality (VR) is defined as an educational tool that uses computer technology to create a three-dimensional (3D) image or environment that can be interacted in a seemingly real or physical way⁶. VR is a broad concept that has many different tools and applications. There are three main categories of VR simulators; namely screen-based VR, immersive VR environments, and virtual worlds⁷. Screen-based VR consist of an interface connected to mechanical devices or haptic units, and can be displayed on any screen but most commonly using a desktop⁸. This sort of VR has commonly been used to develop technical psychomotor skills, such as for endoscopic surgery, due to the fact that it can be used repeatedly and require

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3 very little time to set up⁹. Immersive VR refers to a user in a virtual environment during which
4 time his or her awareness of the real world is disconnected¹⁰. This is most commonly done
5 with the help of VR head-mounted displays (HMDs), such as Oculus Rift or HTC Vive¹¹. This
6 can be further classified into high-end VR (use of dedicated controllers, eg. Oculus Rift, HTC
7 Vive), mobile VR (use of a magnetic switch, eg. Google cardboard, Samsung Gear), or
8 enhanced VR (a combination of HMDs with data gloves or bodysuits)¹¹. It has been shown
9 that immersive VR is associated with learners being more engaged, and acquired better
10 cognitive, psychomotor, and affective skills¹², but immersive VR lacks significant application
11 in medical education to date, possibly due to the high cost of immersive VR that makes it
12 impractical. Virtual worlds are 3D virtual environments based on multiplayer online gaming,
13 freeing users from the constraints of location or time. The use of virtual worlds representing a
14 clinical setting has been used in training emergency personnel on the management of mass-
15 casualty or major incident situations¹³⁻¹⁵. Avatars can be generated representing patients,
16 which provides a more realistic simulation for the user¹⁶.

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The use of VR in medical education can be applied in to two major areas. The first
pertains to the use of VR to develop technical competencies, such as procedural skills or those
that require extensive 3D visualisation. Examples of its applications has been in areas such
as the learning of anatomy, surgical procedures, and key skills such as cardiopulmonary
resuscitation (CPR)¹⁷⁻²⁰. Tools used in teaching of such skills involves mainly the use of
screen-based VR for surgical procedures and 3D visualisation^{19, 21}, and the use of virtual
worlds for training of responses to stressful situations, such as CPR or emergency department
(ED) situations^{14, 20}. A second, less well-researched area, involves using VR to teach 'soft
skills', such as empathy and communication skills with patients^{16, 22, 23}. This commonly
involves the use of avatars (virtual patients) that respond in a certain way for users to
communicate with²². Considering the wide diversity of skills that can be practised with VR,
coupled with the widespread reach and convenience of digital education, this could be a very
powerful educational tool for medical students.

Given the wide array of tools available in the VR toolbox, as well as the diverse areas
that VR can be applied to, there is a need to systematically identify the current VR applications
available and in use for medical education, as well as identify which aspects of medical
education could stand to benefit from VR, as reported in the literature.

While there are reviews aiming to map different applications of VR is used in nursing
and dentistry education, there seem to be none focusing on medical students' education.²⁴,
²⁵. Existing systematic reviews on virtual reality in medical education mainly assess the
effectiveness of VR within different surgical disciplines^{21, 26}. This scoping review will instead
adopt a much broader focus, by mapping out the extent of VR applications rather than focusing
on the effectiveness of VR in a particular discipline.

Objectives

The objective of this scoping review is to identify the different VR tools and applications in undergraduate or pre-registration medical education as reported in the literature. This scoping review also aims to identify any gaps in the current literature and provide suggestions for future research on the use of VR in medical education.

Methods

The proposed scoping review will be conducted in accordance with the JBI methodology for scoping reviews²⁷. This comprises of six stages: (1) identifying the research question; (2) identifying relevant studies; (3) study selection; (4) charting the data; (5) collating, summarizing and reporting the results; and (6) stakeholder consultation. The protocol was registered on the Open Science Framework (OSF)²⁸. The study is planned to begin in mid-March 2021 and is planned to end by July 2021.

Stage 1: Identifying the research question

The objective of this scoping review is to outline the different VR modes available and the applications of VR in undergraduate or pre-registration medical education. In line with the objectives of this scoping review, we have developed the following research questions:

1. How is VR used in undergraduate or pre-registration medical education?
2. What are the main features of the VR applications in undergraduate or pre-registration medical education?
3. What VR tools are available for undergraduate or pre-registration medical education?
4. Which aspects of undergraduate or pre-registration medical education has VR been applied to?

Stage 2: Identifying relevant studies

A comprehensive search of the literature will be done using the following electronic databases: MEDLINE (Ovid), EMBASE (Elsevier), Cochrane Central Register of Controlled Trials (CENTRAL) (Wiley), Educational Resource Information Centre (ERIC) (Ovid). Grey literature will be searched for through Google Scholar. As a first step, a limited search using keywords is conducted in the databases of MEDLINE. The search strategy will be piloted to check appropriateness of keywords and databases. In all retrieved papers, an analysis of the words contained within the title and abstracts, as well as index terms will be done to develop a full search strategy. Thereafter, a second search using all the identified keywords and index terms will be done across all databases. Lastly, the third step will include screening of the reference lists of all studies selected for this scoping review to look for additional sources. A preliminary

version of the MEDLINE search can be found in Appendix 1, which was developed with the help of a medical librarian experienced in the field. The search strategy will include year 2010 to present. We aim to start from 2010 as most literature pertaining to VR for education has been in recent years²⁹. We will search for literature in the English language only. All references identified will be imported into the reference manager software, EndNote X9. The references from different electronic databases will be combined and any duplicate records will be removed.

Stage 3: Study selection

The study selection will follow a two-step screening process, consisting of a title and abstract screening, followed by a full-text review. In both steps, two independent reviews (JHW, SV) will screen the articles against the eligibility criteria. Any disagreements will be discussed, and if no consensus can be reached a third reviewer (BMK) will be consulted. We will consider eligible studies based on the criteria in Table 1.

Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Studies on undergraduate or pre-registration medical students in any geographical setting. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Studies focusing only on virtual patient simulation; AR; MR; or serious gaming; without any involvement of VR.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Studies on VR used in undergraduate or pre-registration medical education. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Studies published before 2010.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Studies involving the use of VR together with another modality, such as immersive VR, VR-based serious gaming, VR-based virtual patients. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Studies in languages other than English.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All primary studies, regardless of study design, and relevant systematic reviews. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opinion pieces, viewpoints and conceptual frameworks, conference abstracts

Table 1. Full inclusion and exclusion criteria.

The first step involves the screening of the title and abstract of the references using the reference manager software, EndNote X9. In order to qualify for the full-text scan, the title and abstract must: i) focus on the use of VR for educational use only, ii) have medical students as

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3 a target population. Virtual patients, i.e. computer-generated programs that simulates real-life
4 clinical scenarios, can also be delivered in a VR format. In this scoping review, VR-based
5 virtual patients will be included. We will also include studies on VR-based serious gaming
6 education. Augmented reality (AR; superimposed VR onto the real-world environment)²⁵ and
7 mixed reality (MR; mixing of both virtual and digital elements, allowing one to interact with both
8 simultaneously)³⁰ are distinct entities that make use of VR and are not classified as VR.
9 Studies focussing solely on MR/AR will also be excluded from this review.
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14 We will consider all primary studies, which includes experimental, observational, and
15 qualitative study designs. Systematic reviews will also be considered. The full-texts of the
16 included studies will be retrieved and their citation details imported. Studies excluded at this
17 stage will be described in the “Characteristics of excluded studies” table, where reasons for
18 exclusion will be noted. This process follows the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic
19 Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines³¹, which is depicted in Figure 1. Two
20 review authors (JHW, SV) will verify the final list of included studies.
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27 Stage 4: Charting the data

28 Relevant data will be extracted from all included studies in the scoping review by two
29 independent reviewers (JHW, SV). A structured data recording form developed by the
30 reviewers will be used and the information recorded on Microsoft Excel®. The extracted data
31 includes details on the author; year of publication; title; type of study; country of study; WHO
32 income level of country; objective of study; number of participants; year of study; type of VR
33 used; VR mode, equipment used; subject taught; revised subject; duration of use; frequency
34 of use; individual/group delivery; extent of immersion; extent of interactivity. A draft the data
35 extraction tool is included in Appendix 2. The draft data extraction tool will be piloted and
36 revised as necessary during the process of extracting data from each study. Any disagreement
37 that arises between reviewers will be resolved through discussion and a third review author
38 (BMK) will act as an arbiter when disagreements cannot be resolved. We will contact the study
39 authors for any missing or incomplete data.
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49 Stage 5: Collating, summarising and reporting the results (results same as data 50 extracted)

51 To characterize and summarize the results, a map of the data extracted from the included
52 papers will be presented in a diagrammatic or tabular form. In alignment with the objective of
53 this study, we will provide an overview of the target participants, content of VR programs,
54 types of studies included and the context of each included study. The tabulated and/or charted
55 results will be accompanied by a narrative summary, which will describe how the results meet
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3 the objectives and aims of this scoping review. We will report findings in line with the “Preferred
4 Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis: extension for Scoping Reviews
5 (PRISMA-ScR)” checklist ³². Gap identification will detect areas where there is paucity of data
6 on VR content and its application in undergraduate or pre-registration medical education.
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10 11 Step 6: Stakeholder consultation

12 A stakeholder consultation is planned to validate the findings from the review, add new
13 insights, and identify gaps for further research. Stakeholders will include researchers
14 experienced in the field of medical education and digital health professions education. The
15 stakeholder consultation will be done via presenting our study and findings to a group of
16 experts in the field of medical education and collating their feedback. Their feedback will be
17 incorporated into how we present our final manuscript.
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22 **Discussion**

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24 Our scoping review will aim to provide insight into the existing evidence as well as gaps on
25 the use of VR in medical education and provide recommendations for future research in this
26 area. By exploring the current tools of VR used in medical application, we can identify areas
27 which may have untapped potential. We can also identify aspects of medical education (e.g.
28 training of certain skills) which do not have any literature regarding the use of VR, thus
29 representing a potential area of research. We will also show whether different tools of VR have
30 been used in the same aspect of medical education, and if so future research could investigate
31 the efficacy of the difference tools within the same sphere.
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40 **Ethics and dissemination**

41 Ethical approval is not required for this study. Future disseminations related to this work will
42 include the publication of the results in a peer-reviewed journal and presentations at
43 conferences.
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46 **Patient and public involvement**

47 Patients and the public were not involved.
48

49 **Author Contributions**

50 LTC conceived the idea for the review. JHW and SV wrote the review protocol. LTC and BMK
51 provided methodological guidance and critically revised the protocol. All authors gave their
52 approval for the final version of the work to be published, and agreed to be accountable for
53 the integrity of the work published.
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Conflicts of Interest

None declared.

Provenance and peer review

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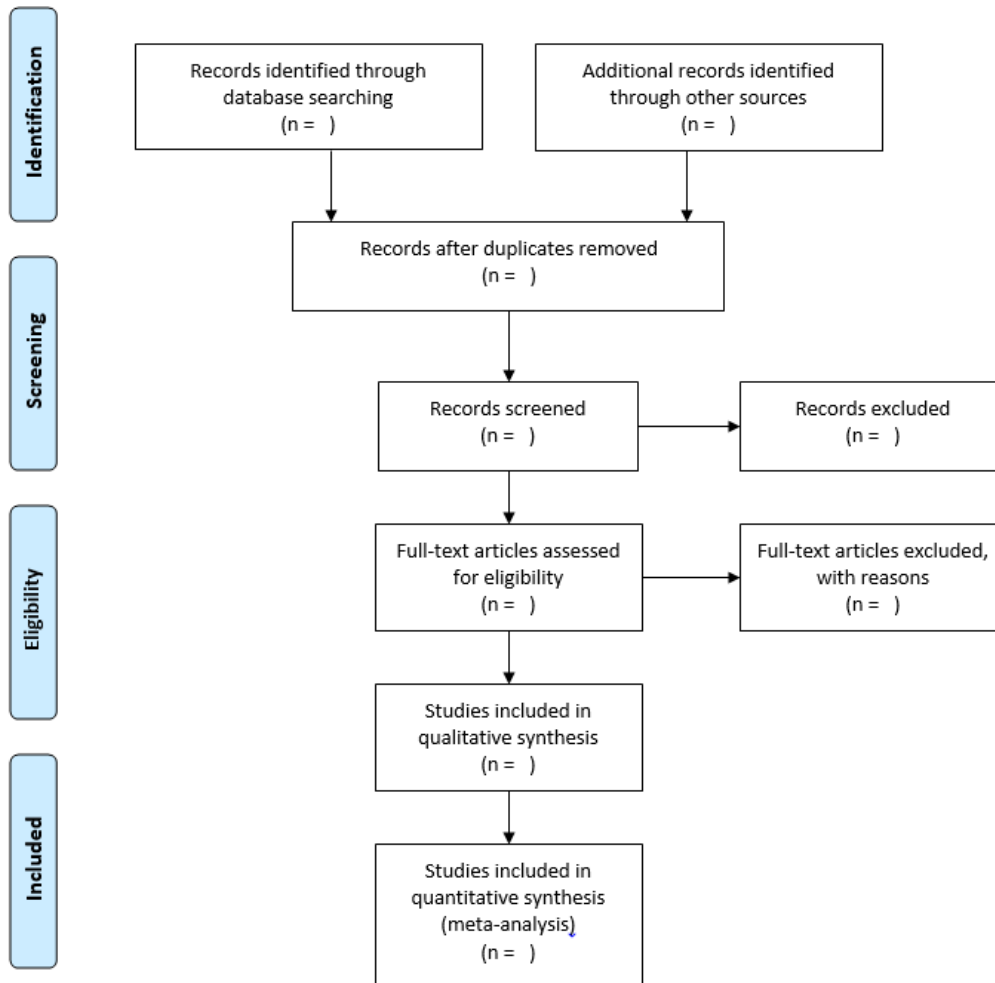
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Caption for Figure 1.

Flow diagram of study selection process, as depicted by the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines.

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Figure 1. Flow diagram of study selection process, as depicted by the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines.

Appendices

Appendix I: Search strategy for MEDLINE

1. exp Virtual Reality/
2. User-computer interface/
3. Computer Simulation/
4. Computer-Assisted Instruction/
5. ((simulat* or virtual realit* or virtual reality simulat* or virtual reality environment* or VRE or three-dimension* or 3D or immersive virtual realit* or immersive VR or HMD* or head-mounted display* or virtual world* or avatar* or virtual patient* or VR room*).mp.
6. 1 or 2 or 3 or 4 or 5
7. exp Education, Medical, Undergraduate/
8. Educational technology/
9. Clinical competence/
10. Educational measurement/
11. Problem-Based Learning/
12. Simulation Training/
13. Education/
14. Teaching/
15. Learning/
16. Curriculum/
17. (educat* or learn* or train* or instruct* or teach*).mp.
18. 7 or 8 or 9 or 10 or 11 or 12 or 13 or 14 or 15 or 16 or 17
19. exp Students, Medical/
20. (medical student* or medical undergraduate* or pre-registrat*).mp.

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21. 19 or 20

22. 6 and 18 and 21

23. limit 22 to yr="2010 -Current"

24. limit 23 to english language

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Appendix II: Data extraction form

Category	Type of Data
1. Bibliographic information	a. Author b. Year of publication c. Country of study i) Region ii) WHO Income level d. Aims of study
2. Information relating to the inclusion criteria	a. Population i) Number of students ii) Year of study b. Setting
3. Information relating to the study	a. Type of VR i) 3D VR ii) VRE iii) VR with head-mounted display iv) VR simulators b. VR mode c. Equipment used i) Input device ii) Output device

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">d. Subject taughte. Revised subjectf. Duration of use of VRg. Frequency of use of VRh. Individual / group deliveryi. Extent of Immersionj. Extent of Interactivity
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