Abstract

The present study investigates whether a virtual reality (VR) intervention can influence pain catastrophizing, pain self-efficacy and other pain-related measures reported during a cold-pressor experience. Forty-five healthy participants underwent two consecutive cold-pressor trials, one using VR and one without VR exposure, in counterbalanced order. The VR intervention encouraged participants to search actively for the correspondence between the pain experienced and a VR stereoscopic figure, which could be interactively manipulated. The VR intervention led to significant increases in pain threshold, pain tolerance and pain self-efficacy, as well as a significant reduction of in vivo pain catastrophizing. The possibilities of using VR as a tool for enhancing perceived pain control are discussed.