

WHO Academy

Health workers learn through 3-D

Augmented Reality: how to stay safe in pandemic.

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The World Health Organization Academy is providing a glimpse of what's in store for lifelong learning in global health – a more immersive and impactful learning experience that will empower health workers everywhere to make their communities safer and healthier, as well as protect their own safety and health.

Launching in May 2021 as one of the WHO's priority transformation initiatives, the Academy is the World Health Organization's state-of-the-art learning centre, with plans to reach millions of health workers, health policy makers, WHO staff and others with the latest innovations in adult learning and training.

The Academy team launched a mobile learning app in May 2020 as one of WHO's many responses to COVID-19 to cover the urgent need to accelerate transmission of guidance to health workers. This app delivers a wealth of knowledge to their smartphones, including the latest guidance from WHO, as well as tools, courses, and virtual workshops. Offering more than 1,600 COVID-19 resource documents in seven languages, the app has already been downloaded by more than 80,000 people and has users in nearly every country. The Academy recently took a further step into the future of lifelong learning, adding a new

feature to the app, in collaboration with Facebook Reality Labs and Nexus Studios, that deploys augmented reality (AR) technology to help health workers address a critical challenge that many face every day – staying safe while they care for patients.

Simply put, AR lets us see the real-life environment right in front of us, such as the room where we are sitting, with a digital augmentation overlay – thereby enabling an immersive and interactive experience. Various forms of AR have been used across a broad range of applications, including industrial design, flight training, televised sporting events and video games.

The WHO Academy is now bringing WHO's guidance to life using AR technology in its newest learning tool, a free 20-minute course for health workers that demonstrates the proper techniques and sequence to put on and remove their PPE, which is critical to keeping them safe. While there are already a number of PPE courses online, the augmented reality technology takes the learning experience to a new, more immersive level, which studies have shown can enable individuals to learn more quickly and retain more of what they have learned.

In this case, the Academy's use of AR brings the demonstration – presented by a lifelike human figure – into the space where the learner happens to be at that moment,



whether it's a break room at a hospital or the comfort of one's own living room. As the course plays out, and viewing through their smartphone screen, the learner can move 360 degrees around the figure to closely observe what it is doing, direct its movements and thereby "learn by doing" the proper techniques and sequence for putting on and removing PPE.

Once the learners complete the course and pass a test administered through the app, they are awarded a digital certificate by the WHO Academy that is attached to their personal identification.

Globally, there are more than 43 million health workers who need to protect their own health and safety. Many have not had access to training, while others could use a refresher course. In an effort to reach as many health workers as possible, the course is available in each of the six official United Nations languages as well as Portuguese.

This innovation is just one example of how advancements in the science of adult learning are bringing opportunities for accelerating progress in health. With these and other innovations in adult learning, the Academy's course designers are able to create learning experiences that are more experiential, involving and engaging learners on their own terms, based on what they need to learn and recognizing what they already know.

Anyone can begin to experience the future of adult learning in health, by downloading the WHO Academy mobile learning app in the Google Play Store or the Apple Store. Links to get the app can be found at academy.who.int.

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