To what extend does an eCoach help motivate a patient to continue treatment?

The obvious benefit of home coaching is of course that the patient does not have to leave his home. Virtual coaches exist in many different forms: as a mobile running application that tells you when it is time to go for another run, or as an annoying paperclip that asks you what you want to do in a text editor. The effectiveness of a virtual coach has been proven in different fields. One study found that beginning athletes did more exercising with a virtual coach than without [1].

But how much influence has a visual representation of an eCoach on the behavior of people (patients)? In a study [2] where young women are motivated towards engineering, the study group found that a visual presence of an eCoach had significantly more influence on the women than with a voice-only coach. This is very interesting, because it not only proves that a visual coach helps, but is even better than a non-visual eCoach. When the coach can be seen and not only heard, people have more the perception they are really interacting with someone [3].

It seems that an eCoach can have a significant effect on a person that interacts with it, so if the effect is as strong with social phobic persons, an eCoach would be a promising tool to motivate them in continuing their treatment.

[1] W. IJsselsteijn et al. (Eds.): PERSUASIVE 2006, LNCS 3962, pp. 158 – 161, 2006.

[2] Rosenberg-Kima, R., Baylor, A. L., Plant, E. A. & Doerr, C.

2007 The importance of interface agent visual presence: voice alone is less effective in impacting young women’s attitudes toward engineering. Persuasive 2007, vol. 4744., pp 214–222. Stanford, CA: Springer.

[3]

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