

Eli's Rehab Report

Trends: 3 Good Reasons to Invest in a Wii

See why nabbing the device is a good deal for you and your patients

So you've heard the hype over the Nintendo Wii -- are you still looking for reasons to purchase this gaming system for your rehab patients? If you need some more convincing, consider these three reasons Eli gathered from your colleagues on why a Wii may be worth the investment.

1. It's a cheaper way to upgrade your therapy equipment: Let's face it -- you may not be able to cough up \$5,000 for a new sitting leg press, but a mere \$249 buys you a basic Wii unit and Wii Sports. And you don't need to limit the usage to kids. Rehab facilities across the country are using them for both children and adults.

The Wii is quite popular with the senior population, according to **Jodi White, PT**, director of rehab for Hoyt Nursing & Rehab Centre in Saginaw, Mich., who uses the Wii with Hoyt's rehab patients. "The patients may be hesitant at first because they see it as a video game for a child, but once you get them started, they really love it," she says.

2. Patients have a whole new outlook on rehab. You know all too well how hard it can be to get a patient out of bed for rehab if you work in an inpatient setting, or how tough it can be to get patients to keep their appointments if you work in an outpatient setting. But the Wii could be a great remedy to unmotivated patients.

Why: "The rehab is no longer about their pathology," says **Lane Blondheim, PT, MT**, who uses a Wii in his Montgomery, Ala.-based private practice Active Health and Rehab. "Patients don't see it as work -- it's an absolute blast for them."

White agrees. "We see an increase in motivation; it's not as repetitive and boring as the same old exercises they're used to."

Watch for: While therapists are encouraged by patient results, they're still looking for more research on this new trend. "As a member of APTA, we try to make sure we put out evidence-based treatments," Blondheim says.

But these studies could be just on the horizon. The Clinical Rehab Roundup on page 38 lists a study that revealed faster rehabilitation in patients who mimicked real-life activities, as opposed to patients doing straight exercises.

3. Nintendo's turning a keen eye to rehab. While Nintendo didn't design the Wii specifically for rehab, the company has recognized a burgeoning new market for its video games. For example, Nintendo exhibited the Wii's soon-to-be-released "Wii Fit Balance Board" at the AARP national convention -- and therapists are champing at the bit to get this into their facilities.

Looking ahead: "Nintendo will continue to pursue expansion of the gaming population" and to "integrate health in entertainment," the company said in its annual report.