



New Intervention for Adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder Prototype Completed by SIMmersion LLC

Adults with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) frequently struggle to fit into a world that does not understand them, and aid is often more difficult find for adults than for children. SIMmersion LLC is hoping to help adults with ASD; the company recently completed a prototype of its simulation software catered to practicing and strengthening communication skills.

Columbia, MD ([PRWEB](#)) June 30, 2008 -- Adults with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) struggle daily to fit in to a world that does not understand them. Some have the advantage of vocational and transition support programs, but limited availability and cost hinder many of these adults from getting help. As a result, their social impairments lead to difficulty at work and social isolation. Computer software programs have been proven to help children with certain aspects of socialization, but there are currently no existing computer programs designed for adults to practice and strengthen basic conversation and communication skills.

[SIMmersion LLC](#)

seeks to remediate this deficiency by announcing the completion of a prototype simulation designed to train and reinforce positive social skills for adults with ASD.

The simulation was developed under a partnership with the Catholic University of America and funded by the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) through a Small Business Innovative Research grant. Program users talk with simulated character Sam Martin, whom they meet at a neighborhood party. They can get to know Sam by asking questions about his job, the school he is attending, and his personal life; in turn, Sam will respond and ask questions to get to know the user. Sam behaves and responds differently during each simulated conversation, allowing for repeated practice that can be generalized to real world peer-to-peer conversations.

The goal of this SIMmersion training simulation is to provide an immersive, realistic environment for adults with ASD to practice and improve their social conversation skills while receiving real-time support and feedback from an on-screen Coach and other embedded help features. As a result of using the simulation, members of this population have the potential for increased opportunities for successful interactions with peers, greater inclusion in work, social, and educational groups, increased job retention, and better overall quality of life.

For Dr. Dale Olsen, Founder and CEO of SIMmersion LLC, creating simulations with such a profound social impact has always been a priority. "Our goal is to dramatically improve the lives of people with autism spectrum disorder and those who love and support them," said Olsen. "This was one of the reasons SIMmersion was started over five years ago."

SIMmersion LLC teamed with [Cheryl Trepagnier](#), Ph.D., Research Professor from the Catholic University of America to generate content for the e-learning material that accompanies the simulation as well as informing the teaching goals for the simulation. "This unique technology has great potential for helping people with ASD. I can see almost unlimited applications for SIMmersion simulations to help with real social interaction," said Trepagnier.

SIMmersion LLC recently submitted a proposal to the NIMH for funding to expand the prototype into a full-featured, multimedia, interactive simulation. The current prototype simulation is not available for sale or distribution; however, the fully developed product will be sold to individuals with ASD and their families, as



well as social, educational, and professional organizations who assist people with ASD.

SIMmersion LLC creates exceptionally realistic interactive simulations that help learners build, practice, and retain communication skills. SIMmersion simulations allow users to conduct face-to-face conversations with simulated characters. Professional actors are used to create life-like, challenging situations. Each simulated character has memory and an advanced emotional model that allows the character to respond to the user's statements as a real person would. The result is a nearly free-form conversation that is different each time the simulation is used. Users receive feedback through the non-verbal cues of an on-screen coach, quantitative scoring at the end of each interaction, and instant replay features.

For more information, go to SIMmersion.com

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