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USING VIRTUAL REALITY TO TAKE THE FEAR OUT OF NEEDLES FOR CHILDREN

Breakthrough Victoria is investing in virtual reality technology that will reduce a patient's pain, stress and anxiety when having common medical procedures, such as blood tests, vaccinations and medical imaging.

Breakthrough Victoria today announced its investment in Australian company Smileyscope, with LaunchVic also investing via the Alice Anderson Fund that supports female founders.

The medical technology company's digital headset changes potentially stressful environments, such as hospitals and clinics, to relaxing virtual locations, like underwater worlds full of colourful fish. Real-world sensations are reframed in the virtual reality world in a supportive and engaging way, improving healthcare experiences and outcomes for patients and clinicians alike.

This virtual reality experience has been shown to reduce a child's pain by up to 60 per cent and reduce the need for restraint by 48 per cent during needle treatments, such as blood tests and intravenous cannulation.

By using virtual reality technology to make needle procedures less scary for children, procedures can be completed faster and without the need for sedation or rescheduling appointments. This means children can get access to the treatment they need without delay.

Smileyscope's headsets are medical grade and fully wipeable, making them the only headset in the world that can be safely used in acute care settings from an infection control point of view. The headsets are also extremely light-weight, which means they can be used by children as young as four-years old.

[Smileyscope](#) was founded in 2019 by two Australian doctors, Dr Evelyn Chan, a paediatric doctor, and Dr Paul Leong, a respiratory specialist. The doctors saw a need to improve the ways we currently manage pain and anxiety during medical procedures.

Breakthrough Victoria's investment will support Smileyscope to expand sales of its existing products into hospitals and community health services around Australia and internationally, as well as expand its range of medical technology devices to help people of all ages for a broader range of conditions.

Quotes attributable to Breakthrough Victoria CEO Grant Dooley

"We invest in innovation for impact and Smileyscope's virtual reality headset is a powerful example of how technology can make a real difference in people's lives."

"As a parent, I know firsthand how stressful it can be for a child to have a needle. Our investment in Smileyscope will help reduce the anxiety around needles and ensure that more children get access to the treatments they need without delay."

About Breakthrough Victoria

Breakthrough Victoria is an investment company established in 2021 to manage the Victorian Government's \$2 billion Breakthrough Victoria Fund. We invest for impact – supporting companies to commercialise new technologies and innovations that will create jobs and investment in Victoria and have a positive impact on people's lives.

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Quotes attributable to Smileyscope co-founder and CEO Dr Evelyn Chan

“Our technology transforms a patient’s healthcare experience from what can be stressful and drawn-out, to one that is quick, easy and fear-free, in addition to saving hospital time and resources. We started in paediatrics, and we’re excited to now be expanding our product development to help people of all ages for a broad range of conditions, including obstetrics and gynaecology, burn and wound care, and palliative care.”

“This Breakthrough Victoria investment will allow us to further unlock market opportunities in Victoria and internationally, resulting in more people benefitting from Smileyscope’s revolutionary technology.”

Quotes attributable to LaunchVic CEO Dr Kate Cornick

“We’re delighted to see that Smileyscope have been successful in securing more investment via Breakthrough Victoria to help them scale this pioneering VR headset technology for children.”

“LaunchVic invested in Smileyscope late last year via its Alice Anderson Fund. We are supportive of the work of its female co-founder Dr Evelyn Chan and look forward to watching the application of this technology into broader hospital and community settings locally and internationally.”

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