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MEDIA RELEASE

Virtual reality aids chronic pain – open house feature

May 27, 2011

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Simon Fraser University researcher **Diane Gromala** is developing new computerized therapies that will give chronic pain sufferers ways to express, visualize and keep track of their pain and caregivers.

Gromala, an associate professor in the School of Interactive Arts and Technology and holder of a Canada Research Chair, heads the Transforming Pain Research Group at SFU.

In her pain studies lab, housed in **SFU Surrey's** new Podium 2 expansion, researchers are targeting chronic pain management through virtual reality techniques.

The lab is the only VR lab of its kind, anywhere, Gromala says. Her research is showing that computerized therapies can give people in chronic pain – one in five Canadians – ways to cope while they wait for treatment by specialists.

The lab and her research will be featured during SFU Surrey's community open house on Saturday, May 28, 11-4 p.m.

A chronic pain sufferer for more than 20 years, Gromala says technology – via virtual techniques, including virtual meditation and even video games – provides a route to pain management that sometimes has better results than pain relieving drugs.

Researchers in the lab have developed a sensory deprivation chamber they call the Cyclosonic Cradle, which combines biofeedback, music, meditation and art therapy to reduce the stress of participants.

The system, which allows people to create music by exploring awareness of their breathing, will be on display at the May 28 open house.

Gromala will also be a keynote speaker at the **Provincial Pain Summit** in Vancouver June 2-4.

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