

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **New Database Provides Online Access to Research and Resources in the Health Games Field**

*Comprehensive resource from Health Games Research to help researchers, game developers and health professionals strengthen the research, design and implementation of health games*

**Santa Barbara, Calif. /// April 13, 2010 ///** Health Games Research, a national program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Pioneer Portfolio (RWJF), today unveiled a searchable database tracking more than 1,200 resources related to digital health games. This online tool, available at [www.healthgamesresearch.org](http://www.healthgamesresearch.org), for the first time enables researchers, game developers, health professionals, educators, funding agencies and policy makers to access in one place a wide-ranging compilation of health games, research findings, publications, organizations and events in this growing field.

The database, which is searchable by category or by keyword, provides a substantial amount of detail about each item with links to more information. Adding to its interactive nature, users can keep the database current by suggesting new items to include.

"The demand for information about health games is extremely high and continues to rise," said Debra Lieberman, Ph.D., director of Health Games Research and communication researcher at the University of California, Santa Barbara. "This database is designed to serve a wide range of people, from doctors who want to create games in their area of specialty, to health promotion professionals who want to use games in health campaigns, to students looking for academic programs in video game design and production, to game developers looking for health behavior-change strategies to incorporate into their games, to researchers looking for journal articles and collaborators. In addition to providing a wide range of information about the field, the database lists hundreds of health games."

Several important studies have investigated the design and effects of health games and have found significant impacts on players' health. However, more research is needed to improve the game elements that could motivate better health behaviors and to discover how different people process various health game elements cognitively, emotionally, socially and physiologically. The Health Games Research database provides resources and published studies so that practitioners and researchers can apply existing findings and conduct new research.

"It is amazing to see the powerful and innovative solutions that emerge when you apply the dynamism and creativity of the digital games space to health and health care challenges," said Paul Tarini, M.A., team director for RWJF's Pioneer Portfolio. "This new database further strengthens the body of evidence needed to take the health games field to new heights. The Pioneer Portfolio is proud to support Health Games Research and other projects that hold the power to transform how we take action to manage our health and health care."

Funded by a 4.5-year, \$8.25 million grant from RWJF's Pioneer Portfolio, which supports innovative ideas that may lead to significant breakthroughs in the future of health and health care, Health Games Research advances the health games field through research and scientific leadership. Since its creation in 2007, the program has awarded nearly \$4 million to 21 research teams to conduct studies of digital games that engage players in physical activity and/or motivate them to improve health behaviors related to

prevention and self-care. The projects include a study of *Lit*, a mobile phone-based smoking cessation game created by Teachers College at Columbia University, in which the player breathes into the phone's microphone as the interface to the game. Also, a team at Union College is studying older adults' motivation to exercise and their health outcomes when they use stationary bikes—or cybercycles—outfitted with screens that display virtual locations and let them race against their personal best times and against others.

Details on these studies and the 19 others funded by Health Games Research can be accessed in the database and at [www.healthgamesresearch.org](http://www.healthgamesresearch.org). Information about the studies and all other categories in the database will be updated regularly, so users are encouraged to check back often to see what's new or to subscribe to the RSS feed on the homepage, [www.healthgamesresearch.org](http://www.healthgamesresearch.org).

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#### **About the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the Pioneer Portfolio**

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation focuses on the pressing health and health care issues facing our country. As the nation's largest philanthropy devoted exclusively to improving the health and health care of all Americans, the Foundation works with a diverse group of organizations and individuals to identify solutions and achieve comprehensive, meaningful and timely change. The Foundation's Pioneer Portfolio supports innovative ideas and projects that may lead to important breakthroughs in health and health care. Projects in the Pioneer Portfolio are future-oriented and look beyond conventional thinking to explore solutions at the cutting edge of health and health care. When it comes to helping Americans lead healthier lives and get the care they need, the Foundation expects to make a difference in your lifetime. For more information, visit [www.rwjf.org/pioneer](http://www.rwjf.org/pioneer).

**About the University of California, Santa Barbara** The University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB) is one of 10 universities in the University of California system, and is one of only 62 research-intensive institutions elected to membership in the prestigious Association of American Universities. The distinguished 1,128-member faculty includes five Nobel Prize winners and scores of elected members or fellows of elite national academies and associations. The campus is also home to 11 national centers and institutes, eight of them sponsored by the National Science Foundation. *U.S. News and World Report's* guide, "America's Best Colleges," ranks UCSB number 11 among all public universities in the nation. For more information, visit [www.ucsb.edu](http://www.ucsb.edu).

UCSB's Institute for Social, Behavioral, and Economic Research (ISBER) brings together researchers from many academic disciplines in order to foster collaboration and span the boundaries between the social and behavioral sciences, the humanities, and the physical and biological sciences. For more information, visit [www.isber.ucsb.edu](http://www.isber.ucsb.edu).

The *Health Games Research* national program at UCSB conducts, supports, and disseminates research to enhance the quality and impact of interactive games used to improve health. For more information, visit [www.healthgamesresearch.org](http://www.healthgamesresearch.org) or contact the program at [healthgamesresearch@isber.ucsb.edu](mailto:healthgamesresearch@isber.ucsb.edu).

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