

Forget Farmville, here's a game that drives genetic research

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Playing online can mean more than killing time, thanks to a new game developed by a team of bioinformaticians at McGill University. Now, players can contribute in a fun way to genetic research.

"There are some calculations that the human [brain](#) does more efficiently than any computer can, such as recognizing a face," explained lead researcher Dr. Jérôme Waldispühl of the School of Computer Science. "Recognizing and sorting the patterns in the human genetic code falls in that category. Our new online [game](#) enables players to have fun while contributing to [genetic research](#) – players can even choose which genetic disease they want to help decode." The game is called Phylo and can be played at <http://phylo.cs.mcgill.ca>.

The game has been tested within the scientific community to ensure its accuracy, but was officially launched today at 11 a.m. "We're hoping that people will enjoy playing the game and that many participants will sign up," Waldispühl said. "This is an opportunity for people to use their free time to contribute in an extremely important way to medical research." Many human diseases are caused by defects in the DNA code, and researchers are only just beginning to unravel this link.

Beyond offering the general public an opportunity to get involved in this research, the game is also useful for teaching the next generation of genetics researchers about their field. "The precise genetic cause of most diseases is not known, but thanks to Phylo gamers, this research could be significantly improved," said Dr. Alain Denise, a Bioinformatics and

Computational Biology researcher at the University of Paris-Sud 11.

The researchers have their sights set high for the future of the game. "We would like to integrate this game directly into Facebook as an application. Farmville, move over!"

Provided by McGill University

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