

Managing diabetes: How can online games help patients make healthier choices?

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Type 2 diabetes is a chronic disease of global relevance. Due to the fear that comes with the long-term bodily degenerative processes, people with the disease often do not actively seek information on the health risks. According to a new study in the *Journal of Consumer Research*, modern day technologies like interactive games and virtual reality platforms can help people with Type 2 diabetes make better choices and monitor their health on a regular basis.

"Our findings bring to light the unrealized power of [information communication technologies](#) as social platforms," write authors Kelly Tian (University of Wyoming), Pookie Sautter, Derek Fisher (both New Mexico State University), Sarah Fischbach (University of Hawaii at Manoa), Cuauhtemoc Luna-Nevarez (Sacred Heart University), Kevin Boberg, Jim Kroger (both New Mexico State University), and Richard Vann (University of Wyoming).

The authors found that when people engage in interactive social platforms that are capable of building and hosting online therapeutic communities, they develop empathy for the people who are living day-to-day with a chronic disease. As the online therapeutic communities are developed, the players become peers who mentor one another in making better choices about their health.

For companies interested in funding grants that support the healthcare industry, study results support the need for establishing online therapeutic communities where visual platforms foster community

engagement and create markets for new technologies. The authors also point out a need for reforming patient education and the design and distribution of information related to a chronic disease like Type 2 diabetes.

"Emerging bio-health companies that develop monitoring products may also benefit from allowing customer input featured in their product designs," the authors conclude. "Patient visions of how these features can help alleviate trauma and improve lives show the power of the therapeutic community."

More information: Kelly Tian, Pookie Sautter, Derek Fisher, Sarah Fischbach, Cuauhtemoc Luna-Nevarez, Kevin Boberg, Jim Kroger, and Richard Vann. "Transforming Health Care: Empowering Therapeutic Communities through Technology-Enhanced Narratives." *Journal of Consumer Research*: August 2014.

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