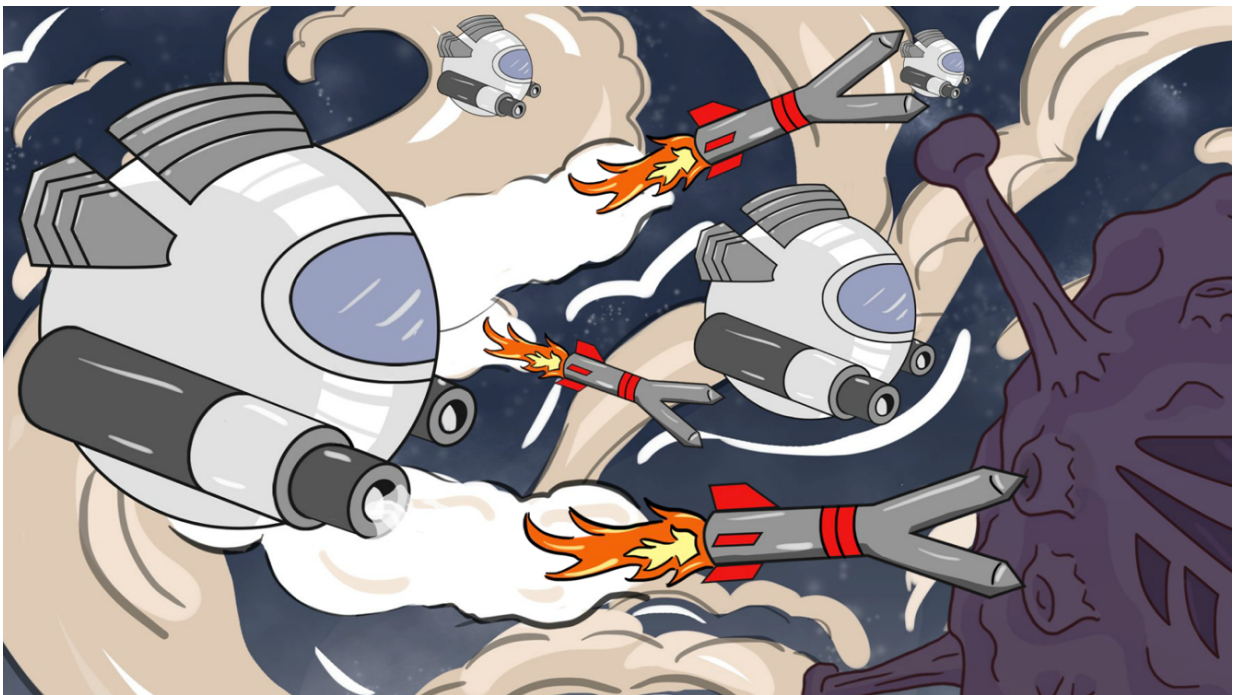


New e-comic, Invasion of the Alien Zombies, aims to educate kids about the immune system

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Armed white blood cells firing antibody missiles at alien invaders (influenza virus) in Immunity Warriors: Invasion of the Alien Zombies, developed by students at Algonquin College and The Ottawa Hospital mHealth Research Team. Credit: Algonquin College and The Ottawa Hospital mHealth Research Team

Alien invaders descend on a world while defensive forces mobilize to

battle the intruders... is this the plot from an upcoming blockbuster movie or a creative approach to science education? These scenes are from a new online comic, *Immunity Warriors: Invasion of the Alien Zombies*, created to educate elementary school students about the immune system and the role of immunization in defending against illness.

Conceived by Dr. Kumanan Wilson, a physician, researcher and [comic](#) book fan, *Invasion of the Alien Zombies* approaches immunization education from a child's perspective.

"I was inspired to create the comic after presenting to my son's Grade 6 science class about the immune system and immunization," said Dr. Wilson, an internal medicine specialist and scientist at The Ottawa Hospital and professor at the University of Ottawa. "Despite some complex scientific concepts, the kids were really engaged with the presentation that told the story using a space-invasion theme. I began thinking of how to expand the content to educate a wider group of kids about the importance of vaccination."

He approached Algonquin College's Health and Wellness Research Centre to see if there was interest in collaborating. Four senior students from three different programs worked on the project, and the digital comic was born.

"Our research centre focuses on the convergence of technology and health so the project really piqued our interest," said Kevin Holmes, Project Manager, Office of Applied Research and Innovation, Algonquin College. "We assembled an amazing student team from the Schools of Media and Design and Advanced Technology who were tasked with taking Dr. Wilson's concept and turning it into a compelling visual story, which is exactly what they did."

Invasion of the Alien Zombies was unveiled to a Grade 7 [science class](#) at Broadview Public School in Ottawa, Ontario, the same school that inspired the comic. Dr. Wilson hopes this content may be incorporated into the educational curriculum.

"I believe we can use digital media to make science and health education more fun. At the same time, we can combat future vaccine hesitancy by creating positive attitudes about vaccination amongst children," he said.

Dr. Wilson is also founder of The Ottawa Hospital mHealth Research Team and creator of CANImmunize, a mobile immunization tracking system that allows people across Canada to keep track of their family's immunizations through their smartphones and receive appointment reminders, outbreak alerts and expert-approved information about immunization. The comic will be available on CANImmunize, which is funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada.

More than 170,000 Canadians have downloaded CANImmunize, available on iTunes and Google Play.

As part of a pilot project, parents in Ottawa may report their children's immunization status to Ottawa Public Health directly through CANImmunize. It is the only jurisdiction in the country with this option.

"For parents, the CANImmunize app is an excellent and easy way to keep track of their children's vaccinations and report their status to Ottawa Public Health to avoid suspension," said Catherine Deschambault, Principal of Broadview Public School. "The comic is a terrific way to engage and educate students about science.

Development of the comic book was partially funded through the College and Community Innovation Program, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC).

More information: www.immunitywarriors.com/

Provided by Ottawa Hospital Research Institute

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