

Game On: Learning Gets Upgraded



Will gamification change the way dermatologists learn?

BY MARK KAUFMANN, MD

>> When I was a kid, I logged hours upon hours playing Pac-Man, eating up all of the dots as I tried to artfully avoid Blinky, Pinky, Inky, and Clyde. Did all this play sharpen my reflexes? Maybe. Did it teach me anything? Perhaps. But unlike today's video games, Pac-Man was purely a recreational pursuit.

Forget textbooks, lectures, and labs. Future dermatologists may soon be learning in a whole new (and likely much more fun) way.

Gamification or the application of game elements and digital game design techniques to non-game tasks, such as learning, may just be the future of dermatology education. Level Ex just released the Top Derm game for dermatologists, a peer-reviewed game designed to get us up to speed on the latest advances in the specialty. It is the company's fifth medical mobile game. Others are focused on anesthesiology, gastroenterology, pulmonology, and cardiology.

Top Derm features games across a wide range of common and uncommon dermatological areas, including skin cancer, pediatric dermatology, cosmetic dermatology, and surgical dermatology. It will also offer continuing medical education credits for players. The game was developed by more than 140 dermatologists who collaborated with game industry designers, developers, and artists. All the images are high-resolution and were created using Level Ex's proprietary computer graphics.

"As someone who has spent his career pushing the cutting-edge of video game graphics, I'm especially impressed by what we've achieved visually with our computer-generated images in Top Derm. Using industry-leading VFX technology, we've built a system capable of rendering images so realistic that dermatologists struggle to discern them from real photos," says Sam Glassenberg, CEO and founder of Level Ex, in a news release.

Other features include expertise maps that analyze performance with reports showing progress, areas of strength, and improvement opportunities and the ability to support dermatology colleagues by submitting content and leaving feedback.

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There are also some pay-to-play opportunities for advertisers. Pharma sponsors can create subcategories within a game or provide extra content around clinical study data.

The new app is free to download at the App Store or Google Play

Peter Lio, MD, a clinical assistant professor of dermatology and pediatrics at Northwestern University's Feinberg School of Medicine in Chicago and a dermatologist at Medical Dermatology Associates of Chicago, recently wrote with Eran Gwillim about gamification in this magazine (Read it at PracDerm.com/GameLearning). It can, "allow physicians to practice difficult cases multiple times, providing repetition of common and uncommon cases on-demand and can train clinicians to perform as elite athletes train, with repetition," they wrote. "The same impulses that draw millions to sink hours into video games could be applied to improving medical skills and knowledge. Deployment of well-designed serious games in medicine could lead to more people becoming addicted to learning, developing new skills, and nurturing of elite performers."

WHAT'S NEXT

The jury is still out on what role, if any, gamification will play in how our future colleagues learn, but I encourage you to check out Top Derm for yourself. (You can learn more in the recent DermWireTV report, available at PracticalDermatology.com/news.) ■

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