Designing Serious Video Games for Health Behavior Change: Current Status and Future Directions

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Abstract

Serious video games for health are designed to entertain while changing a specific health behavior. This article identifies behavioral principles that can guide the development of serious video games focused on changing a variety of health behaviors, including those attempting to decrease risk of obesity and type 2 diabetes. Guidelines discussed include how to develop video games that provide a solid foundation for behavior change by enhancing a player's knowledge and skill, ways in which personal mastery experiences can be incorporated into a video game environment, using game characters and avatars to promote observational learning, creating personalized experiences through tailoring, and the importance of achieving a balance between "fun-ness" and "seriousness." The article concludes with suggestions for future research needed to inform this rapidly growing field.

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