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- Today's news Current issue
- Special issues & data

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Games for Health and Peace

Playing computer and video games can be good for your health. That's the contention of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and it is willing to put \$8.25-million into the hands of researchers to back up this claim.

The program, [Health Games Research](#), will be directed by Debra Lieberman, a communication researcher at the University of California at Santa Barbara. It will hand out grants for investigators to explore the best designs for games that involve physical activity (other than ducking the Nintendo Wii wand that broke loose from its tether) as well as those that promote good health behaviors.

If passing up that extra slice of cheesecake makes you a better fighter in *World of Warcraft*, will you pass up the cake in real life?

On the global well-being front, a Carnegie Mellon University professor is using the [PeaceMaker](#) video game, in which players attempt to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, to examine how knowledge of the conflict affects the ways that people negotiate.

Cleotilde Gonzalez, director of the university's [Dynamic Decision Making Laboratory](#), will track students who are taking a course on the conflict. PeaceMaker gets players to take on the roles of Israeli and Palestinian leaders in negotiations. Ms. Gonzalez plans to see if students playing the game at the end of the semester — presumably after they have learned more about the issues — make different choices than students at the beginning of the class. —*Josh Fischman*



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