



Transcript of podcast with:

Chinwe Onyekere, program officer, [Robert Wood Johnson Foundation](#)

Chauncy Rucker (CR): Welcome, I'm Chauncy Rucker. I'm at the 2008 Technology Innovator's Conference hosted by the National Center for Technology Innovation. The theme this year is "Thriving in a Global Marketplace." I'm having a conversation today with Chinwe Onyekere. Chinwe, I understand that your, well I don't just understand it, I was there to hear, that your presentation was all about a gaming project that your involved with so tell us about that.

Chinwe Onyekere (CO): Sure, I would be happy to. I have the pleasure of being a program officer at the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Pioneer Portfolio, which is a relatively new established portfolio of the Foundation. It was established approximately five years ago. It's in large part with the establishment of the Pioneer Portfolio that provides a context for our interest in getting into the area of video games and how it can be used to improve health and health care so let me first give you a context of the Pioneer Portfolio and I think that will then showcase our interest in help establish our interest in video games to improve health and health care.

So the Pioneer Portfolio is a unique portfolio within the Foundation that's focused explicitly on the future in exploring innovation and breakthrough solutions that might transform what America's health and health care looks like ten and twenty years down the road.

Other parts of the Foundation also support innovation. They do so in the context of the challenges we face today. So for example, they are focusing on other issues around how do we turn the tides of the childhood obesity epidemic, how can we solve the shortage of nurses and thinking about how we can help Americans without health insurance get the care they need and deserve?

The Pioneer team was established because senior management and the board felt we needed to dedicate a group of staff and funds that were focused on exploring new ideas, new areas and different ways of thinking about problems and think about radical, out-of-the-box solutions and it was through that lens that we decided to get into the area of video games.

Video games, we were finding, were in so many people's homes and across many different demographic areas from race and ethnicity and gender and age and just the cutting edge design of video games was extremely intriguing. Games can be immersive and interactive so we really wanted to tap the power of video games to improve health and health care and so we've done that two ways. We've created and supported [Games for Health](#), which is an opportunity to highlight video games at an annual



meeting, through regional meet-ups and competitions and game jams to show how video games can be used to improve health and health care and thinking about games in all different ways from simulations, to mobile gaming, to augmented reality games and all of those games are under the purview of what we are focusing on through games for health.

It was through the learning from Games for Health and what was being showcased that we decided what was also needed was that we needed to build an evidence base and we needed to really support this field in growing by showing how and why video games can be effective in improving health and health care. So we've developed health games research which is an \$8.25 million dollar initiative that's focused really on trying to develop an evidence base to improve health and health care via video games. We've had one round of really successful funding and now we are about to fund our second round of funding that will come out January 15 of 2009. I highly encourage people to take a look at our website which is www.rwjf.org to get more information about health games research and also games for health.

CR: That's wonderful. Could you just give me the website a little slower this time, I'm a little slow. Thank you.

CO: Sure. The website for the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation is www.rwjf.org.

CR: Great, and I enjoyed your presentation, and this is a great summary of it and it sounds like you're doing wonderful stuff.

CO: Thank you.

CR: Thank you very much.

CO: My pleasure.