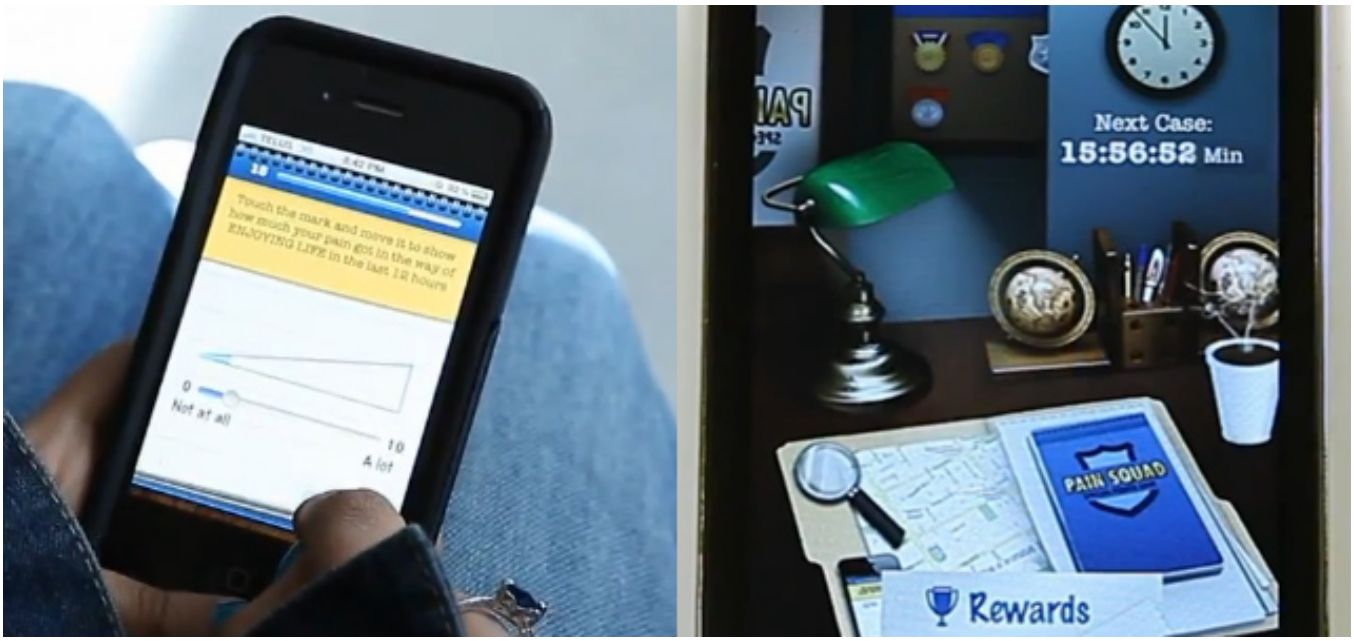
In Canada, app gamifies pain monitoring for young cancer patients



Earlier this year we wrote about Tonic Health, an iPad app that aimed to make the process of collecting patients' data at medical centres more engaging. Taking this concept and applying it to children's healthcare, the Canada-based Hospital for Sick Children, also known as SickKids, has launched the Pain Squad app, which gamifies the process of tracking the physical and emotional wellbeing of young people with cancer.

The emotional effects of cancer mean that it can be hard for medical professionals to motivate their patients to fill out forms relating to their illness, but this data can be key for keeping track of their condition. Using the narrative of a police force hunting down pain, users are inducted as a rookie officer working on the case. Patients fill out a daily survey – which asks questions relating to whether they felt pain that day, how intense it was and its location – and can progress through the ranks of the force when they keep their records updated. The concept was created by Toronto-based media agency Cundari, who got stars from Rookie Blue and Flashpoint – two primetime cop shows in Canada – to appear in videos that are unlocked when patients do well and progress the narrative. By gamifying the process, the app gives patients an incentive to keep a daily journal of their pain. The app is still in the testing phase but SickKids hopes to release it later this year. The following video demonstrates how the app works:

Gamification has proven popular in the medical world – take the T-Haler for asthma sufferers and the depression-tackling SPARX game for example. Are there any other areas of healthcare that could benefit?

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