

“ Recently published findings... prove that paying obese people cash for weight loss is highly effective – even doubling fat loss rates

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# HEALTH TECH REVOLUTION

The advent of mobile healthtech innovations that resolve wellness related issues – **Merilee Kern**

Various reports explore the convergence of gamification and machine learning. One by SpringerLink with clear mobile health (mHealth) applicability underscores: “Overall,

machine learning methods have been used to improve the performance of gamified tasks.”

“In this regard, the fact that personalised adaptive gamification has the potential to enhance an individual’s motivation and performance especially in learning platforms raises the application of machine learning,” it notes.

SpringerLink adds: “Machine learning can tailor gamified interactions and dynamically configure interaction parameters. Furthermore, gamification and machine learning

can also be used cooperatively to enhance the effect of one another towards a predefined task. For example, in the context of behavioural change, dynamically changing gamified interactions can encourage users to interact with the system in a sustainable manner.”

Relative to gamification efficacy is a report by Brown University’s Warren Alpert Medical School, which stresses the importance of research and explains why this method is proven to work.

It notes that “the most prominent cate-



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gories of persuasive feedback involve goal setting, overcoming challenges, providing feedback on performance, reinforcing positive behaviour, comparing progress and social connectivity.”

A Research Dive report provides even more clarity, explaining that “gamification technologies help people adhere to the path of attaining their goals by tapping into their instincts and strengths. Gamification in healthcare apps serves as a good cop and bad cop at the same time, keeping up high enthusiasm as well as loyalty among people.”

Meanwhile, recently published findings from the JAMA Network’s financial incentives for weight reduction clinical trials prove that paying obese people cash for

weight loss is highly effective – even doubling fat loss rates.

With the efficacy of healthcare gamification being consistently proven, the category has skyrocketed and hugely sustained growth is forecasted for the years ahead.

In fact, another Research Dive report reveals that the global healthcare gamification market is anticipated to rise at a stunning 11 percent compound annual growth rate (CAGR) and garner a revenue of around US\$ 9,040.9 million by 2031 (up from 3,260 million dollars in 2021).

The report notes that this is amid the gradual shift of the medical sector to preventive healthcare, which is expected to help the prevention application sub-segment become the most profitable one.

**THE EXPERT VIEW** Given the multitude of studies and reports upholding the efficacy of gamified health and wellness for prevention and intervention, credentialed field authorities advocate the benefits of gamification for healthcare in general, and diet and fitness in particular.

According to sports dietitian Tara Collingwood, “losing weight and keeping it off is one of the most difficult behaviours to change. Making a game of increasing exercise and healthier nutrition choices can be a powerful way to provide additional motivation.”

“People with a competitive streak love to have a way to play a game but also get health benefits at the same time. Having a financial investment or incentive adds another layer of motivation,” she adds.

Former Director of Nutrition at the Pritikin Longevity Center Kimberly Gomer says: “So many people rely on their smartphones and apps to provide them with information on how to get healthier and lose weight.”

“Any app that offers both support and accountability is a huge asset to those who enjoy that type of connection. Apps that offer fitness support and accountability are extremely helpful for those that want to include fitness in their lifestyle,” she adds.

Nutrition expert and fitness specialist William Toro appreciates the many ways that technology is spurring participation and success with wellness gamification, which is enjoying increasing demand.

He notes: “People find it easy to track their health issues, improvements, tasks to be set and reminders.”

Users can set a diet plan, reminders not to consume high calorie food and watch videos to do complex exercise postures that are difficult to remember, as well as contact and consult diet and fitness experts when needed.

Dietitian and nutrition coach Emily Tills highlights the motivational benefits of gami-

fying wellness endeavours, elaborating that “most individuals can’t find the motivation within themselves to do a certain task, build a habit or try to work out consistently. They don’t find it fun enough or make excuses as to why they’re too busy to fit some of these things in.”

Tills continues: “The gamification of health and nutrition can be a convenient way to challenge someone, and build a better habit. The game can add a layer of fun to things that one would usually find mundane or not worth doing. We also enjoy things that give us positive feedback.”

Meanwhile, health and wellbeing behavioural science expert Casey Hughes says that “gamification is getting increasingly popular in healthcare due to its ability to make redundant or anxiety provoking experiences more dynamic and exciting.”

She explains that while gamification can positively impact motivation, the focus should be on “progress, not perfection.” Hughes explains: “Gamification for weight loss is most effective when it creates an engaging environment for building healthy habits that encourages experimentation and iteration.”

Dietitian Julianna Coughlin says: “Gamification is a great way to incentivise and gamify weight loss by bringing in outside stimulants, rewards and a community to help motivate those involved.”

“The lack of motivation is one of the most common reasons why weight loss efforts fail – because people become disinterested and bored. Game methods can keep the goal at the front of the participant’s mind,” she notes.

**GAMERS WIN BIG** As Research Dive aptly

points out, “acquiring healthy habits is not always an enjoyable journey. But with the help of gamification, the entire process can be a little more fun, stress free, motivating and enjoyable. Nowadays, gamification is widely used in healthcare to encourage people to stick to their diet, sleep better, exercise regularly or keep up with their mental well-being.”

Implementing lasting and meaningful self-care behavioural changes can prove challenging if not seemingly impossible for some. Gamifying the process – especially in relation to enhanced fitness and weight loss with elements of fun and competition – and then financially rewarding the achievements are now proving to be powerful catalysts.

Gamification has proved to be an effective way to build one’s health and wellbeing levels.

