

Videogame helps cancer patients take their medicine

New York: Playing a specially designed videogame can help adolescents and young adult cancer patients adhere more closely to their prescribed treatment, according to a report in the journal *Pediatrics*.

"Targeted videogames can help improve the lives of young people with cancer, most importantly improve their adherence to their treatment," Pamela Kato of the University Medical Center Utrecht in the Netherlands,



THE INSIDE STORY: A screenshot from Re-Mission, in which players control a tiny robot, which moves around in a 3D environment representing the inside of the body of a young cancer patient

the study's lead author, said.

Adherence is a major problem in this age group, Kato and her colleagues point out in their report. While dramatic improvements in survival have been seen in pediatric cancer patients, they add, death rates among teens and young adult patients have not followed this trend. "They're kind of a tough group that gets a little bit lost in the system," Kato said.

To investigate whether playing a videogame might help, the researchers randomly assigned 375 male and female patients 13 to 29 years old being treated at centers in the US, Canada and Australia to play "Re-Mission" or "Indiana Jones and the Emperor's Tomb," a standard video game not focused on cancer care.

In Re-Mission, developed by HopeLab, a Redwood City, California-based non-profit company, players control a tiny robot called Roxxi who moves around in a 3-D environment representing the inside of the body of a young cancer patient.

Players can use Roxxi to blast cancer cells and control side effects, and winning the game requires taking chemotherapy drugs and antibiotics, using relaxation techniques, eating food, and keeping up with other types of self-care. *AGENCIES*