Will Computer Gamers Aid in the Development of Medical Devices Now?

Sean Fenske

I saw in this article [1] that online gamers collaborated to solve a challenge posed to them in the form of a game. The challenge was to create an accurate model of a retrovirus protein that will allow researchers to design drugs targeted at key elements of the protein to help block it. Hopefully, the research will lead to great breakthroughs in AIDS/HIV research and perhaps other diseases as well.

Perhaps even more interesting is the use of the program that was used to create the game. Researchers at the University of Washington turned to Foldit, which takes scientific challenges and turns them into games. In this case, that game was then turned over to the online gamers who figured out the correct model in approximately three weeks.

Could a variation of this type of collaboration actually result in new technology being developed in the future, even in areas such as medical devices? The idea is pretty incredible and I look forward to hearing of more success stories from this program. No doubt there will be new attention being given to it by science and research communities.

Sean Fenske, Editor-in-Chief

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