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January 2023



# Newsletter



These past few months have been an exciting and rewarding time for all of us at XR Pediatrics. We're grateful to be able to share all of our growth and upcoming events with you!

## New Team Members



### Justin Berry, MA

Longtime collaborator Justin Berry has recently joined the XR Pediatrics team in an official capacity. Justin is acting as our Creative Producer and brings his artistic and technical skills to our projects. His experience with motion capture will be an valuable asset as we launch our own system this coming Spring.

### Difie Antwi, Master's Candidate, Yale School of Public Health

Adwoa Difie Antwi, an MPH Candidate pursuing a degree in Healthcare Management at Yale University, has joined XR Pediatrics as a student collaborator. As a former educator, Difie understands the



needs of both students and teachers and her insights will guide the development of our school-based interventions. We're excited to welcome her to XR Pediatrics!

## Recent Publications

With funding from the NIH/NICHD and In partnership with [Dr. Ijeoma Opara and the SASH Lab](#) at Yale, our team created InvestiDate, a sex-positive, web-based multiplayer videogame designed to help Black teen girls make informed choices when it comes to evaluating and selecting potential romantic partners with the goal of reducing HIV/STIs. InvestiDate's Protocol Paper was recently published by JMIR Publications! We're proud of all the work our team put into this project and are grateful that others will be able to learn from it.



**CHECK IT OUT**

## Recent Events

### CT Association of School-Based Health Centers Conference

In November, members of the XR Pediatrics team attended the annual CASBHC Conference in Southbury, CT. There the team was able to demo our game Invite Only to participants and better connect with the school communities to build stronger relationships. It was great to see conference-goers get excited about using VR for the first time.



### 2022 Columbia's Innovations in Simulation Summit

On November 11th, XR Pediatrics Co-Directors Drs. Asher Marks and Kimberly Hieftje attended Columbia's Innovations in Simulation Summit as keynote speakers and

plenary speakers focusing on XR Pediatrics' work and the current state of XR technology in pediatric research.



### XR Pediatrics Holiday Dinner

This December the wider XR Pediatrics community came together for a lovely dinner in downtown New Haven. This was a wonderful opportunity for us to step away from the headsets and spend time as community before the holidays!



### 2022 Health 2.0 Conference

XR Pediatrics Co-Director Dr. Asher Marks was in Las Vegas late last month at the 2022 Health 2.0 Conference. He spoke about the current innovations in healthcare arising from XR and other new technologies.



## Recent Recognitions

### Health 2.0 Leadership Award

While Dr. Marks was attending the Health 2.0 conference, he was also awarded a 2022 Leadership Award by the Health 2.0 Conference. He was recognized for his continued dedication to advancing XR applications in medicine.



### Indiana University Service Award

XR Pediatrics Director Dr. Kimberly Hieftje was recently recognized as the awardee of



Indiana University's John R. Endwright Alumni Service Award, given for Dr. Hieftje's continued service to the IU community! She will be formally presented with the award at a gala next month.

*See Dr. Hieftje during her Freshman year at Indiana University*



# Project Highlight

## Invite Only VR: reHASHED

E-cigarettes and cannabis remain two of the most commonly used substances among US adolescents. The ongoing risk continues to prompt public health concerns that these products will create a generation of people who will experience the numerous adverse health consequences associated with addiction.

In 2018, XR Pediatrics (then the Play4REAL XR Lab) developed Invite Only VR: A Vaping Prevention Game for the Oculus Go. Invite Only VR immersed students in a virtual world where they could practice making healthy choices while navigating the peer pressures of vaping. The game was evaluated in CT middle schools with nearly 300 students and was found to improve players' e-cigarette knowledge, nicotine addiction knowledge, perceived addictiveness of e-cigarettes, and increase players' perceptions of e-cigarette harm.

XR Pediatrics is now developing a sequel, titled Invite Only: reHASHED, designed to expand the evidence- and theory-based, primary e-cigarette prevention content to include cannabis use prevention as well. In conjunction with PreviewLabs, XR Pediatrics is tackling both the substance use and underlying behavioral pressures associated with substance use initiation.

**Stay tuned for more information about this exciting project!**

**reHASHED team:** Dr. Kimberly Hieftje, co-PI, Dr. Deepa Camenga, co-PI, Dr. Randi Schuster, Dr. Claudia-Santi Fernandes, Dr. Veronica Weser, Dr. Asher Marks, Joshua Rigsby, Jake Shaker, and Adwoa Difie Antwi.



# Open Positions

The XR Pediatrics team is still looking for a Postdoctoral associate to join our team to work with us on project with the CDC to help prevent NICU infection. If you or anyone you know are interested, please apply!

[LEARN MORE](#)



# Upcoming Events

## GDC- March 20-24, 2023

The XR Pediatrics team will be traveling to the 2023 Game Developer's Conference in San Francisco in March. Co-directors Drs. Asher Marks and Kimberly Hieftje will be presenting on best practices for developing XR applications and games for youth. Heading to GDC? Let's meet up!

## PAX East- March 23-26, 2023

Also in March, XR Pediatrics will be attending the PAX East Conference in Boston. PAX East will offer the XRPeds team to connect with the wider gaming community and learn more about the coming advancements in the video game industry!

**Yale**

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