

Powers of spider venom explored in VR game

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Credit: University of East Anglia

The mention of spider venom is enough to send shivers down the spine of many, but not for a group of researchers at the University of East Anglia (UEA) researching its ability to ease pain.

The team have created a [virtual reality game](#) to highlight the benefits of spider venom, and it will be launched in time for the perfect season for creepy crawlies - Halloween.

The [educational game](#), developed by students from UEA's School of Pharmacy and School of Computing Sciences, is based on ongoing research into the potential of spider venom to stop [pain](#) and potentially cure chronic illness.

The virtual reality experience creates a view of the brain and submerges players into a world where they learn how pain is processed, why we sense pain and how spider venom has the ability to alleviate it. It teaches users about the functions of cells and proteins that sit on these cells that are crucial in the treatment of pain.

Secondly (and perhaps not for the faint hearted) the virtual spiders start releasing their venom as soon as you click on it. The player then has to quickly work out which of the spider venoms can shut down pain. The experience ends when the player identifies the perfect venom that blocks pain-causing proteins, ending the game with a "pain over".

Lucka Bibic, from UEA's School of Pharmacy, said the game has a serious message: "Researching the amazing properties of [spider venom](#) to help treat pain has obvious benefits for medicine and society, and we hope this virtual reality game will help engage more people in the importance of research to discover new treatments."

"Three-dimensional, immersive games have been shown to be valuable educational tools and are one of the few technologies which engage people of all ages, while effectively teaching science."

The game, aptly named 'Bug Off Pain', launches on 27th October just in time for Halloween at the Norwich Science Festival, where attendees will have the opportunity to try the game first hand – if they dare.

Bug Off Pain will be available to download via QR code from www.bugoffpain.com from Friday.

Provided by University of East Anglia

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