Computer Game Gnomes Raise Funds for Breast Cancer Vaccine Research

World of Warcraft's "Running of the Gnomes" raises $7,000 for breast cancer research.

October 28, 2017 By Liz Highleyman

When I mentioned all the various awareness and fundraising events taking place in October for Breast Cancer Awareness Month, the resident computer game aficionado told me cyberspace was no exception.

On October 14, the popular multiplayer role-playing game World of Warcraft featured the "Running of the Gnomes," with a horde of pink-haired gnomes racing across a treacherous landscape to raise money for breast cancer research.

The "Running of the Gnomes" has been an annual tradition since 2010, and game developer Blizzard Entertainment integrated it into the game this year. Players of all levels can participate.

Last year's race involved nearly 3,000 gnomes and raised $5,500, according to PC Games News. Race organizer Dravvie said on her blog that the 2017 run drew 7,000 participating gnomes and raised $16,000. You can still donate.

While many fundraisers collect money for breast cancer research in general, the gnome run is more focused, raising funds for an experimental breast cancer vaccine being developed by Vincent Tuohy, PhD, and his team at the Cleveland Clinic.

Vaccines to prevent cancer are challenging because the antigens displayed on tumors are variations of proteins expressed on normal human cells. Stimulating an immune response against these antigens could trigger an autoimmune attack on healthy tissue.

Tuohy's experimental vaccine, which has shown promise in studies of mice, targets alpha-lactalbumin, a protein expressed on a majority of human breast cancers. Under normal circumstances, the protein is only produced during breast milk production, so the vaccine should not harm non-lactating breast tissue. The researchers suggested the vaccine could be safe and effective for women who are past their child-bearing years butpremenopausal, a period when the risk of developing breast cancer is high.

However, this vaccine candidate does not appear to be in human clinical trials yet.

Other types of vaccines are designed to treat breast cancer rather than prevent it. For example, an investigational vaccine targeting the p53 protein, used in conjunction with an immunotherapy drug (a PD-1 checkpoint inhibitor) that takes the brakes off T cell activity, is under development at City of Hope Cancer Center near Los Angeles. A large number of other experimental breast cancer vaccine candidates are in clinical trials across the United States.

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.

http://beta.docker.cancerhealth.com/blog/computer-game-gnomes-raise-funds-breast-cancer-vaccine-research