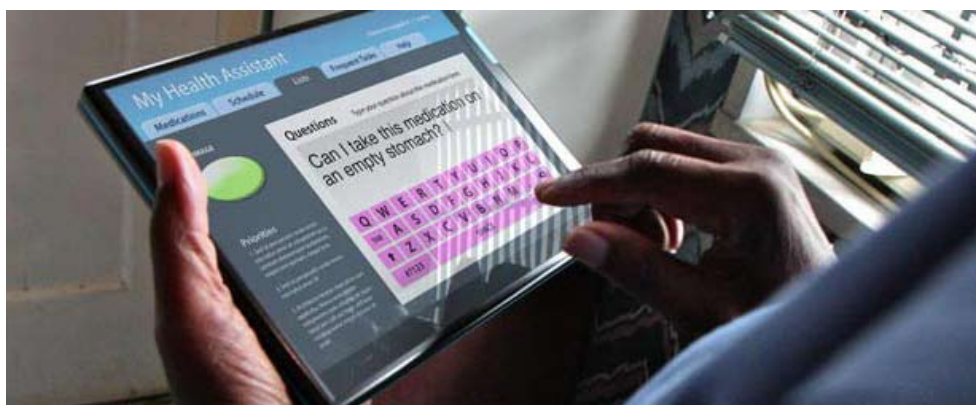




Pioneer portfolio



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To learn more about our initiatives and objectives visit www.rwjf.org/pioneer.

The Pioneer Portfolio supports innovative ideas and projects that may lead to significant breakthroughs in health and health care. Projects in the Pioneer Portfolio are future-oriented and look beyond conventional thinking to explore solutions at the cutting edge of health and health care.

OUR APPROACH

The Pioneer Portfolio supports transformative, high-return ideas—ideas that have the potential to drive dramatic change today and that may shape the future of people's health, the quality of care they receive, and the systems through which that care is provided. Through Pioneer, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation has dedicated staff and financial resources to look to the future to support trends and ideas with the potential for significant health and social impact.

The Pioneer Portfolio addresses the fact that progress toward solving tough health and health care problems in America often has been too slow or limited in scope. We support innovators whose bold ideas and rigorous approaches move us beyond incremental improvements and accelerate the quest for change. We seek those whose ideas break free of conventional thinking, often because they reframe and refocus problems and explore different paths to breakthroughs. Rather than examine what's wrong and how to fix it, Pioneer grantees ask "What might be possible, and how do we get there?" To advance their efforts, Pioneer offers financial support, strategic counsel and opportunities to work with others who share our passion for change and our impatience with incremental gains.

WHAT WE FUND

The Pioneer Portfolio seeks ideas not only from the mainstream of health and health care, but also looks beyond these fields for innovations that may have transformative impact. Several Pioneer projects apply approaches from diverse sectors such as finance, design and entertainment to forge new solutions in health and health care arenas. In this way, Pioneer provides a distinct alternative to other Foundation program areas that focus on targeted problems or populations.

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Examples of current projects:

- **Health Prediction Markets.** University of Iowa business school professors teamed up with an infectious disease expert to test whether the Iowa Electronic Markets—prediction markets that aggregate information and are best known for predicting election and film box office results—can target where influenza may strike in advance. Pioneer has supported the testing of health prediction markets to forecast the spread first of domestic seasonal and, later, global avian influenza. During the 2006–2007 U.S. flu season, the markets accurately forecasted outbreaks two to three weeks in advance of official announcements; in contrast, public health organizations generally employ surveillance systems using retrospective data, confirming outbreaks after they occur. In 2009 this team launched new markets with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s Division of STD Prevention and other public health partners to hasten progress in eradicating syphilis. They will closely track performance, seeing whether prediction markets can serve as a powerful tool to enhance surveillance, prevention and response efforts for a wider range of public health threats.
- **Positive Health.** Dr. Martin E.P. Seligman of the University of Pennsylvania is laying the groundwork for “positive health,” a new approach to improving wellbeing that emphasizes “health strengths” rather than the conventional mix of disease diagnosis, treatment and prevention. Building on progress in positive psychology, the field established by Seligman that applies validated interventions to boost the strengths and virtues that help us thrive in daily life, this project explores whether positive health may reveal a variety of potent, low-cost approaches that serve as a buffer against physical and mental illness and, more importantly, enhance people’s overall health strengths.
- **Project HealthDesign.** This program’s first phase supported nine interdisciplinary teams to look beyond stand-alone personal health records (PHRs) to design next-generation PHR systems that empower patients to better manage their health and health care. The vision is that a patient managing asthma and diabetes, for example, uses a PHR system outfitted with tailored IT applications that remind her to take medications, monitor glucose levels and even incorporate air quality updates into daily decisions. Moving forward, Project HealthDesign will develop innovative ways to help people capture and interpret information on the everyday patterns of their lives—such as diet, physical activity levels, pain episodes and medication usage—and enable clinicians to integrate that data meaningfully into clinical practice. Beyond just giving patients access to their health information, smart PHR systems will help them and their care providers manage and apply that data to improve their health, care and quality of life.

whose ideas break free of conventional thinking, reframe and refocus problems and explore different breakthroughs.

- **Games for Health.** Digital interactive games can do so much more than entertain; they can help people adopt healthier behaviors and better manage conditions, strengthen public health, improve care delivery and more. Since 2004 Pioneer has supported the Games for Health Project to build this dynamic field and connect health and health care problems with creative solutions emerging from the games industry. And, to build evidence on whether games improve health outcomes and identify design elements that contribute to more effective games, Pioneer launched *Health Games Research* in 2007. Currently supporting studies on topics ranging from how motion-based games may help stroke patients progress faster in physical therapy to how people in substance abuse treatment can practice skills and behaviors in a virtual world to prevent real-world relapses, the program will give approximately \$2 million in new grants in 2009.
- **U.S. Biobank.** The realm of genomics will enable medicine to be more precise and effective in promoting health and preventing and treating illness. To strengthen the research infrastructure needed to achieve this goal, the Pioneer Portfolio is supporting Kaiser Permanente's Division of Research to develop one of the world's largest and most diverse repositories of genetic, environmental and health data. Scientists will use the repository, known as a "biobank," as part of a comprehensive research initiative to conduct groundbreaking work to establish the genetic and environmental factors that influence common diseases such as heart disease, cancer, diabetes and Alzheimer's, among others. The biobank's unequaled size and power will drive research that can dramatically improve the health and health care of millions of Americans.

The Pioneer Portfolio expects to consider ideas that may be at an earlier stage of development than those in other Foundation funding areas. By funding projects in stages, we can assess initial outcomes and potential impact before pursuing longer-term, larger investments. We anticipate funding a number of early-stage projects, of which only a few will merit strong consideration for subsequent funding.

Because we are looking for opportunities with high, possibly long-term returns amidst great uncertainty, we recognize that our portfolio of projects inevitably will include several that do not accomplish the ambitious, hoped-for objectives. What is important is that we provide a place for innovators to test powerful ideas, stimulate new thinking and take risks in pursuit of health and health care breakthroughs.

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Robert Wood Johnson Foundation