

Sawbones 158: Medical Games

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Clint: Sawbones is a show about medical history, and nothing the hosts say should be taken as medical advice or opinion. It's for fun. Can't you just have fun for an hour, and not try to diagnose your mystery boil? We think you've earned it. Just sit back, relax, and enjoy a moment of distraction from that weird growth. You're worth it.

[theme music plays]

Justin:

Hello, everybody. Welcome to Sawbones, a marital tour of misguided medicine. I'm your cohost, Justin McElroy.

Sydnee:

And I'm Sydnee McElroy.

Justin:

Hey Syd, remember how you had to move one of your weeks to hospital service because I was filming my, uh, TV show?

Sydnee:

Yeah.

Justin:

Well, uh, I remember how that meant that you had to have two back-to-back hospital service weeks.

Sydnee:

Yeah, I remember that well, in fact, uh, I am currently in the midst of the second week, so not only do I remember it, I'm living it.

Justin:

Well—

Sydnee:

And it is exhausting.

Justin:

Uh, well, I have good news because of that. I have done you a beautiful gift and I am going... I have prepared Sawbones this week.

Sydnee:

So wait, by gift, you mean you've done for me what I've been doing for you for how many episodes? Yeah.

Justin:

Uh, roughly 154—

Sydnee:

Okay.

Justin:

... or something.

Sydnee:

Sure.

Justin:

Something like that. But this is a special—

Sydnee:

I appreciate it. Thank you, honey.

Justin:

Yeah, no problem.

Sydnee:

That is very sweet of you.

Justin:

It's all gonna be all medical.

Sydnee:

I know research is not necessarily your forte—

Justin:

Nor is medicine. But I have—

Sydnee:

Definitely not medicine. I mean, super not medicine.

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

Like, so not medicine.

Justin:

Yeah.

Sydnee:

It can be seen from space—

Justin:

We got it. No.

Sydnee:

... how not medicine—

Justin:

No, no, no, no, no. We got it.

Sydnee:

... is your forte. [laughs]

Justin:

We got it. Okay, good. Yeah, I gotcha. Okay.

Sydnee:

Did I make that clear?

Justin:

Yeah, but the good news is, I found I'm striking a perfect balance—

Sydnee:

Uh-huh.

Justin:

... and I'm here to talk about... Medical Video Games.

Sydnee:

Are... I didn't know, there was such a thing as medical video games.

Justin:

Well, that's not true. You have played—

Sydnee:

Oh, okay.

Justin:

... medical video—

Sydnee:

Okay.

Justin:

... games.

Sydnee:

Fair enough. Fair enough.

Justin:

And we will get to those, but, uh, I've thought that, you know, this is one area where our, um, interest sort of align and I thought that it, it would be worth talking about some of the medical themed video games that, that have come out because I think we've done medical themed TV shows, and those are great, um, and all pretty much widely inaccurate in a fun way.

Sydnee:

Yes.

Justin:

Um, but I wanted to run by you some medical video games and I was hoping for some of 'em you could just kind of give me a read on... Not all of 'em, but like, if they sound like there's some things I'm suspicious of as to whether they're part of medical care, regular medical care.

Sydnee:

And I... So I can tell you the medical parts that are wrong and you can tell me the parts that aren't really video games.

Justin:

They're all video games.

Sydnee:

Oh, okay.

Justin:

Yeah. They're all video games.

Sydnee:

So, oh, so it's not one of those like two truths and a lie?

Justin:

No, that would be good though.

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

Um, the first... And this is actually kind of a stretch, but the first comes to us from... Uh, and these are all going to be fairly brief because we have more than I would've guessed to get through. Um, and this is not gonna be completely comprehensive, but it's pretty darn close. There's probably a couple that I've missed.

Sydnee:

Your research... The times you've done research, I will say is very exhaustive.

Justin:

Yes. Very exhaustive.

Sydnee:

Yes.

Justin:

I feel like there's going to be one statement. There's gonna be one podcast ever, about medical video games.

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

And I wanted to be like a good reference material. So the first one I wanna talk about 1983, way back, way, way back—

Sydnee:

The, the year that brought you, me.

Justin:

The year that brought you Sydnee McElroy—

Sydnee:

The year that brought us Sydnee McElroy. So the best year. Basically the best year.

Justin:

The Smirls might have killed a little time waiting for Syd, by playing Plaque Attack. This is a, uh, Atari game, uh, maybe by Activision—

Sydnee:

Mm-hmm.

Justin:

... where you played as a toothpaste tube. Now this is a bit of a stretch.

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

This isn't technically medicine. This is dental medicine, but you, uh, you played as a toothpaste tube.

Sydnee:

You play as the tube of tooth—not the brush?

Justin:

No. You're a tube of toothpaste—

Sydnee:

Uh-huh.

Justin:

... shooting toothpaste at hamburgers and more junk food. Uh, and, uh, here's the best part of this game. You're trying to defend teeth, they're like actual teeth you're defending.

Sydnee:

Uh-huh.

Justin:

If you score over 35,000 points, Activision would send you a patch, identifying you as part of the No Plaque Pack, um, to, to commemorate your achievement if you send them like a photo of your score.

Sydnee:

Right? And then you could wear that to school and definitely not get bullied.

Justin:

Definitely get kicked in the butt several times by everybody.

Sydnee:

I, I have a problem with the idea that hamburgers are the junk food they thought were bad for your teeth.

Justin:

It's not... Listen, graphics weren't great by then, you have to be careful about what food you represent.

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

Like what does candy look like? I mean, it's gonna be hard to—

Sydnee:

But you think that's the bad food for your teeth?

Justin:

No, I know like sugar and stuff. I guess that candy is not that hard.

Sydnee:

Yeah. Why didn't they just have little pieces of candy?

Justin:

They might have had pieces of candy in 1990—[laughing] 1988, sorry. Life and Death on the PC.

Sydnee:

Mm-hmm.

Justin:

Uh, now this is interesting because it is actually, you could, you could make an argument looking at all the, the, uh, like medical games that'll come out. This actually seems like it's the one that seems the closest to reality, I guess.

Sydnee:

Yeah. I don't know. The first thing you say is you play as abdominal surgeons. So—

Justin:

And, that's just my bad grammar, Sydnee. Geez.

Sydnee:

No. I mean like an—

Justin:

Abdominal surgeon.

Sydnee:

An abdominal surgeon.

Justin:

Yeah. That only does abdomens.

Sydnee:

Uh-huh.

Justin:

Okay. So that's not a thing. Okay. I could have guessed.

Sydnee:

I think—I think a general surgeon usually covers the abdomen.

Justin:

Well, you have to... Like, there's, uh, you—it's a surgical game, but like, you have to visit the patient. You have to like poke and prod them to figure out what the diagnosis is. And then you actually have to go in with tools. And like you scrub in, you have to, uh, anesthetize, you have to, uh, put antiseptic on the actual area. You have to cut through different layers—

Sydnee:

Wow.

Justin:

... and tie off blood vessels and stuff. And this is an extremely hard game. There are also like lectures that you sit through and you just [laughs] read lectures. Uh—

Sydnee:

Did... Was there any history on this game? Was it maybe supposed to be some sort of like, you know, we have this technology now we have like PC games and maybe we could use them for... I mean, 'cause the idea of like using a game for educational purposes is not unique. You, we use it to teach kids like letters and numbers. So do you think somebody was like, well I'll use it to teach doctors how to doctor?

Justin:

Um, no.

Sydnee:

Because that sounds like a boring video game. I have sat through medical school lectures. I... Some of them are, I don't know. I find them exciting sometimes.

Justin:

This is still, this is a, a—

Sydnee:

If that's not your thing, I have trouble seeing how that's a game.

Justin:

This is still a very well regarded title because it was—it struggled because it was not very fun, but critics continued to—

Sydnee:

It doesn't sound fun.

Justin:

... lie on the fact that it was so realistic. Uh, in 1990, there was a sequel called Life & Death 2: The Brain. And that one, you're a brain surgeon, which I know is real. So don't tell me that's not real.

Sydnee:

No, that is a real thing.

Justin:

Perfect.

Sydnee:

I actually would kind of like to play that, except I, like I said, I already lived through medical school. I don't know that I wanna redo it.

Justin:

Brush up on your abdomens—

Sydnee:

My—

Justin:

... because it's time to step into those shoes. Uh I'm... I wanna step outta chronology because the next few are, are... After this one, are kind of in a clump, but so we'll skip that a little bit to 1994 with the release of SimHealth. It's a simulation of the US healthcare system—

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

... created by Maxis of... I know. Of Sim City fame. And this was right around the, the time when the Clinton Health Plan was, um, starting to, to be a really hot national topic. And the people of Maxis decided to create a game to represent, uh, the American Healthcare System. Uh, the quote from Entertainment Weekly, which gave the game a C-, said, uh, "For a vivid demonstration of just how complex and boring the healthcare crisis is, try spending a few hours with SimHealth." Um, it, it was not a well-regarded title, but—

Sydnee:

I can imagine, but that actually sounds like a really important game.

Justin:

Um, yeah, I mean, it's very important, but the... Like, to look at this game in action, is absolutely dizzying. You would be shocked at how many of the images of this game are literally just you, the player looking at a stack of different books here, I'm showing you Sydnee, one screenshot where it's just like 20 different books about, um, insurance funding and cost control and benefits for you to reference.

Sydnee:

Some, you know, for someone to understand all of that, that, that is, you know, within this game, for someone to understand all of that well enough to have been proposing a whole new healthcare plan back in '94, or perhaps currently they must be a, an incredibly intelligent person is all I could say.

Justin:

Yeah

Sydnee:

Incredibly intelligent and capable is all I could say.

Justin:

That's all you need to say.

Sydnee:

I would actually really enjoy this game, I think. [laughs]

Justin:

Yeah. I think you probably would.

Sydnee:

I think it would do everyone—

Justin:

It's a game for [inaudible 00:09:55].

Sydnee:

Huh?

Justin:

Except it's a game for non-lingers.

Sydnee:

I think everybody would really benefit from playing this game, if you like to gamify things. This is one of the most important things you could learn is how the US healthcare system works. And then you could figure out what you think the problems are and what you think we could do better and then vote for those things. That's what I think.

Justin:

Uh, we have now—

Sydnee:

I approve.

Justin:

Okay. Uh, we have now made our way to my favorite chunk of the, of, uh, medical video games. And it is the Raya Educational Series. There were four games in the Raya educational series. They are all amazing. Uh, but we're just gonna go chronologically. Uh, the first one is Ca—don't read ahead. Look at me. Don't read ahead. Captain Novolin features an epi—eponymous... There's the word, hero who has type one diabetes. It was sponsored by Novo Nordisk, which makes Novolin—

Sydnee:

The insulin.

Justin:

... the insulin.

Sydnee:

Right.

Justin:

This is a... I played this. It is a 2D side scroller, where captain Novolin has to fight aliens and rescue the mayor of Pineville who is also diabetic. Kind of like, I guess he's only called in on diabetic cases.

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

Um, he has to avoid aliens that look like junk food, but then he finds healthy foods to keep his blood sugar in line.

Sydnee:

Mm-hmm.

Justin:

And if it gets too out of whack, he dies.

Sydnee:

What? He dies?

Justin:

He dies. That's what happens to him. I mean, you have three lives, but still.

Sydnee:

How old is this character?

Justin:

Uh, I mean, he's in his, I mean, he's an adult man.

Sydnee:

Okay.

Justin:

An adult man, male superhero.

Sydnee:

Well, he, he has type one diabetes, so I didn't know if it was like an inspirational game for... 'Cause type one diabetes is typically, not always, but typically diagnosed in childhood, so—

Justin:

Mm-hmm. Well, I guess he's just been living with it. He's been doing a great job and he did such a great job, they made him captain Novolin. [laughing] And, uh, he literally... This is amazing actually. Uh, he literally has to check his blood sugar at the beginning of each stage and then give himself a shot of insulin. Like you literally, with the control pad, have to check your... Like, uh, uh, reading against the container and then give yourself an appropriate amount of insulin. You could... Kids could actually ask their doctor for a, uh, like you can customize it to the amount of insulin that you actually take.

Sydnee:

I think this is a really cool idea.

Justin:

It's a very cool idea. It's baffling that it is an actual game, because out of context, it is a wild experience.

Sydnee:

I think that's a... No, I think this is a—

Justin:

And it's a bad video game. This is what I can't emphasize enough. The junk food is very hard to avoid and you basically... They're just like, you need peanut butter and toast and, uh, cereal in this level. And there's just like toasts on the ground. And captain Novolin's like, "Oh, perfect. This is good."

Sydnee:

Well, I have a little bit of a problem with a kid playing the game if... Especially if the kid also has type one diabetes and then the character dies periodically. That's a little harsh.

Justin:

Yeah, that's a little much.

Sydnee:

It's a little much. Uh, but let me say that with, with type one diabetes, and especially if it's diagnosed very young, getting a child to start to kind of take ownership over that, so that eventually they will be the one... 'Cause you know, initially parents are the ones managing blood sugar. Getting children to take ownership of that as they get older so that they learn how to manage their own disease, it can be very difficult and something like this, that would not only encourage it kid but reward them for understanding and managing their own diabetes—

Justin:

Mm-hmm—

Sydnee:

... that would be, that's a, I think that's cool.

Justin:

Uh, the follow—

Sydnee:

I approve.

Justin:

The follow up to captain Novolin was Rex Ronan, an experimental surgeon.

Sydnee:

This sounds less educational. [laughs]

Justin:

This is awesome. It's about a guy named Jake Westborough who has a job with the Blackburn tobacco company. He's been smoking since he was 15 and because of that, Jake is dying. His only hope is Rex Ronan, a surgeon that shrinks himself down to near microscopic size to travel inside Jake's body and remove the tar, nicotine, pre-cancer cells and other health hazards that are preventing Jake from getting better. Now I know what you're thinking. Why isn't he going to get better? Well, uh, there are also micro robots in Jake's body that, uh, he is uh, uh, uh—

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

... that was sent to kill him by the tobacco company. And they, they wanna kill him because they think that if, if, if, uh, if Jake gets better, he will tell the world how dangerous smoking is. Now, I know this beg the question, if, I mean, if he died, that would probably send a fairly powerful message about the dangers of smoking too. But no, Jake's gonna blow the lid off of this whole dangers of smoking thing.

Sydnee:

Is he the only one who knows? [laughs]

Justin:

He's the only one who knows.

Sydnee:

How is he the only one who knows?

Justin:

I don't... I... It is baffling. This is 1994, Okay? We knew smoking was bad.

Sydnee:

Yeah. We were... Everyone was very aware. Well, and it sounds like, either they were trying to make an educational game. So they said, well, he'll go in and zap like, like you said, like precancerous cells and nicotine and all that stuff. And then they said, and also the micro robots... there'll be microbots.

Justin:

Micro... Well, they send him, they, they're not gonna attack him. Like tar isn't gonna attack him. You gotta have any antagonist who's trying to kill Westborough.

Sydnee:

Why can't tar attack you?

Justin:

Why would tar attack you?

Sydnee:

Because it, it's bad.

Justin:

It's a bad—

Sydnee:

I don't know, it's a video game. I don't design video games. Make the tar evil. Why can't the tar be evil?

Justin:

I mean, that would be, maybe you should design the video game, Sydnee.

Sydnee:

If the junk food can attack you in the plaque game and in the diabetes game, why can't tar attack you?

Justin:

The war for your lungs is not over because in 1995 we met Bronkie the bronch—bronchiasaurus. So here's the plot of this game, 'cause they just keep getting more and more buck wild as the Rata educational series continues to go off the rails.

Sydnee:

Uh-huh.

Justin:

Meteors strike a dinosaur town and they raise so much dust that all the dinosaurs got asthma.

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

This is not... I'm not making this up.

Sydnee:

That's not—

Justin:

All the dinosaurs got asthma.

Sydnee:

Okay. That's not how asthma works, but keep going.

Justin:

They, they build a machine to try to get rid of all the dust, but then it was destroyed by a bad guy. So now, uh, Bronkie and his uh, fellow dinosaur Trakie are collecting pieces of a machine that will clear away the air, but they're vulnerable to shortness of breath from tar, cigarette smoke, furry animals, et cetera.

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

And Bronkie frequently has to manage his asthma, similar to Captain Novolin frequent—

Sydnee:

That's a really scary—

Justin:

... pit stops.

Sydnee:

That's a really scary message though, because what it sounds like is, if you go in a dusty enough room, you're going to develop lung problems.

Justin:

Um, that's how it works?

Sydnee:

No, you don't get asthma from being in a dusty room.

Justin:

Listen, they made video games, there weren't doctors. Okay? [laughs]

Sydnee:

They didn't ask any?

Justin:

Next up, Packy & Marlon. [laughs] This was designed for kids with juvenile diabetes, but accent on the juvenile. I know type one diabetes is also juvenile diabetes.

Sydnee:

Yes, yes.

Justin:

This, this is for, for kids. Packy & Marlon are at a summer camp. This is, you could tell, you could feel Raya starting to give up. They're at a summer camp where rats have stolen all the food and medical supplies.

Sydnee:

What kind of summer camp are they? What is this? What is this summer? This is—

Justin:

Well, they're in a kinda summer camp where two diabetic elephants are the only ones that can stop the rats that stole all the food, medical supplies all while... You guessed it, managing their diabetes.

Sydnee:

What? Okay, why are they elephants? I thought elephants were scared of mice.

Justin:

They're, they're scared of mice, they're more scared of diabetes. So they have to get their food and medical supplies back.

Sydnee:

Why can't the kids get them back from the rats? Why did they have to call the elephants?

Justin:

I'm pretty sure it's like an anthropomorphic things. And I don't think there's both elephants and kids at this wild summer camp.

Sydnee:

Oh, so there are a bunch of—

Justin:

Elephants.

Sydnee:

... elephants kids.

Justin:

Not, I mean they're junior, junior elephants with diabetes at summer camp where rat stole all the food. [laughs]

Sydnee:

And two of them or—

Justin:

Yeah. They are two—

Sydnee:

Are they two like other elephants from outside that came in—

Justin:

No. Packy & Marlon are like the only... You know what, I'm moving on. 1997.

Sydnee:

I still need to know more about this summer camp. Is this a post-apocalyptic summer camp?

Justin:

I'll...

Sydnee:

Like, what is going on?

Justin:

I'll save you some videos afterwards?

Sydnee:

Is this a summer camp from the Hunger Games? Why are there rats everywhere stealing food?

Justin:

Uh, Packy & Marlon was 1995. 1997 brings us Theme Hospital. Now this is actually one of the better regarded. There aren't a lot of well regarded, uh, uh, games, but—

Sydnee:

I can't imagine why.

Justin:

Yeah. I know, uh, Theme Hospital uh, was made by Bullfrog. It was originally conceived by Peter Molyneux who has been involved with like Fable and uh, you remember Black and White. Remember with Black and White where you're a—

Sydnee:

Yes.

Justin:

... god and you had to—

Sydnee:

Yes.

Justin:

That's Peter Molyneux.

Sydnee:

Okay.

Justin:

Um, but he didn't actually develop Theme Hospital. Theme Hospital was, uh, published by Electronic Arts in '97. And you would, uh, design and operate a privately owned hospital, um, and you're trying to cure patients. Now, I know what you're wondering. Why is it called Theme Hospital? Well, it's because it was a sequel to the game Theme Park.

Sydnee:

Mm-hmm.

Justin:

... and I don't think they knew... I mean, I guess that, that's probably one way of, uh, uh, demonstrating that it's the sequel to Theme Park, but it is... They just called it Theme Hospital, which doesn't make any sense. It's a very, um, it's, it's an odd, uh, it's an odd game, but it's one that actually came to the PC and, uh, PlayStation, uh, a little bit later, but, um, it's a very silly game. Like the, the, the sense of humor—

Sydnee:

Mm-hmm.

Justin:

... is one of the things that people remember about it a lot, which makes sense. I think if you're making a medical game, you don't want it to get too, uh, bogged down. There's a lot of pop culture—

Sydnee:

Then you don't want the main character to die if they don't do well.

Justin:

Yeah. And there's a lot of like pop culture references. There's um, there's, uh, uh, uh, references to Red Dwarf and The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy and stuff like that. So classic nerd references from, from the '90s. Um—

Sydnee:

Well, I mean, that, that sounds kind of neat. I don't know that like being the business manager of a hospital sounds fun to me.

Justin:

Well, um—

Sydnee:

But I'm a doctor, so of course it doesn't.

Justin:

Uh, luckily for you, there was, um, Life Science in 2005. Life Science Surgical Unit, which was the localized version of a Japanese game called Resident Doctor Tendo 2: The Scales of Life. The first Resident Doctor Tendo was never, um, released here in America.

Sydnee:

Oh, okay.

Justin:

Uh, it's a surgery game on the DS. Um, you actually... The interesting thing about it and really the only reason this is, um, notable, it, it was just as focused on the relationships between the doctors, uh, as, as the other ones, uh, as, as surgery. Sorry. Uh, but the, the interesting thing about this, is that there's an eight year gap. FEMA hospital comes out in '97. You have... It's eight years before there's another medically themed game. And what you see is, uh, the advent of the DS and the we, which all of a sudden makes medical games, specifically games that feature surgery, make a lot more sense.

Sydnee:

Because of the stylus.

Justin:

Yeah. So this becomes the new era of, uh, uh, medical games. Uh, they make a big comeback.

Sydnee:

That makes sense to me that if you were going to focus on one area of medicine that would make a good game, it would probably be surgery because there is a, a hands on component to it. So.

Justin:

Yep.

Sydnee:

Well, Justin, I wanna hear more.

Justin:

You see you're slow on the yep, so this is a hard gig. Isn't it getting into the billing department? [laughing] It's not, it's not... You, you gotta be ready for it.

Sydnee:

Oh, all I have to do is say, "Well, Justin, tell me what comes next in the evolution of medical video games."

Justin:

That's not... I mean, that, I usually make 'em sound more natural. I just read ahead and make it sound more natural. Okay. Let's go to the billing department.

Sydnee:

Let's go.

[theme music plays]

Sydnee:

All right, Justin. So what came, what came next in the... I'm assuming more surgery games?

Justin:

More surgery games. That is the name of the biz. Uh, and, and we have arrived now in 2005, uh, um, with the most prolific and celebrated medical franchise in history, I would say. I think it's fair, it's, you know, that's not a hugely impressive achievement, but—

Sydnee:

I'll take your word for it. I certainly don't have any opinion to the contrary.

Justin:

Well, you'll have an opinion on this one, 'cause it's Trauma Center. Trauma—

Sydnee:

I've played this one.

Justin:

You have played this one. The first one of these was Under The Knife and it went so well that they started pounding them out every year. Now the, the

things you have to know about Trauma Center, and Syd will back me up on this, I think. First off, it's a highly, uh, stylized take on, uh, surgery. There's a lot of generic sort of like antibiotic gel and—

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

... 'make you better' cream and—

Sydnee:

Yes. And there's also a lot of, I think the same thing you find in a lot of medical TV shows, there's a lot of drama around everything.

Justin:

Oh yeah. It's all very dramatic.

Sydnee:

Yes. A lot of, uh, backstory about the relationships between various people and like other personal drama that's going on as well as, um, like intense music kind of the thing you see, like in a... I know I never understood why that's part of a medical TV show, but it's part of this too.

Justin:

There was one where somebody had a bomb inside them and you [laughs] had to diffuse them.

Sydnee:

Which is exactly a plot from Grey's Anatomy as well.

Justin:

Yeah. Who was there first? I, I, it's hard for me to say, but I think the biggest, uh, creative license, um, uh, is that you had something called the healing touch, which, uh, with the pointer or the DS stylus, you would draw a star on this screen and it would like make the patient be... much better.

Sydnee:

Yeah. You, you could do that and like raise their vital signs because there was like this generic, like, vital signs thing—

Justin:

Mm-hmm—

Sydnee:

... which just went down when you weren't doing very well. [laughs]

Justin:

They're doing worse.

Sydnee:

Like all vital signs are just down.

Justin:

Yeah. They're just worse.

Sydnee:

They're all just going down.

Justin:

They're just bad.

Sydnee:

And then you could make them go up with... There was a, I think there was like a syringe of, of liquid—

Justin:

Just better?

Sydnee:

... and you just shoot the better liquid in them and it, it makes everything, all the vitals go up.

Justin:

But these are—

Sydnee:

... like they do.

Justin:

These are so popular. Atlas started pushing them out annually. You had um, Under The Knife, Second Opinion, New Blood, Under The Knife 2 and lastly, uh, Trauma Team. Now, those are all surgery games. Uh, not huge differences, I would say maybe some new tools here and there. And I think the, the visuals got, uh, a little bit better, but, um, the, the biggest change,

I think it was the last one in this series 2010, Trauma Team. Um, and I don't know if you remember this one Syd, but in addition to surgery—

Sydnee:

Mm-hmm.

Justin:

... it had some other specialties in there. Um, they had first responders, they had orthopedics, they had endoscopy, uh, and then they had diagnosis and forensics. Now the diagnosis and forensics was great 'cause it was basically like House.

Sydnee:

It was a House-like character.

Justin:

Yeah.

Sydnee:

And you just diagnosed weird ailments.

Justin:

Yeah.

Sydnee:

That was fun.

Justin:

Um, that was great. And there was a, uh, uh, uh, that... That I'm assuming was inspired by the, the popularity of, of House at the time. Uh, because that was—

Sydnee:

'Cause I think the character was like a surly. Wasn't he kind of a grumpy surly—

Justin:

He was like... You know what it was? He was like, um, almost like a Charl, more of a, like a prodigy kind of like super genius if memory, uh, if memory serves.

Sydnee:

I thought he was a little testy too.

Justin:

He was a little testy. Yeah.

Sydnee:

I think he was a little testy.

Justin:

Um, but, uh, uh, there were a couple of other specialties in there that I wanted to just run past you to see if like, this is how it works in the medical field. Um, orthopedics—

Sydnee:

That's a specialty.

Justin:

Yeah. Okay.

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

Um—

Sydnee:

Is that the question, 'cause yes, there, they're orthopedic surgeons.

Justin:

It had a, uh, the... It featured a laser to carve artificial bone fragments. Um, like car—is that real?

Sydnee:

No. I mean, I have cut through bone in an operating room before and I used a saw.

Justin:

Um, okay.

Sydnee:

We have like electric saws and then we have like this thin wire that is strung between two handles and you kind of like loop it under the bone and then pull back and forth. If you can imagine that.

Justin:

Yeah.

Sydnee:

It's got teeth on it.

Justin:

This was like that, but it was like, um, it was a, a laser and you use it to kill stigma and burn off polyps.

Sydnee:

I'm not—

Justin:

Do you burn off polyps?

Sydnee:

I'm not sure. No.

Justin:

With lasers?

Sydnee:

No. I mean, polyps are removed. Like they're cut out, but they're—

Justin:

Um, in do... Uh, also players switch off with each completed step in the operation if a mistake is made.

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

So if you make a mistake in co-op mode with a doctor—

Sydnee:

Uh-huh.

Justin:

... do you switch?

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

Just let the other person drive?

Sydnee:

My turn, my turn. That's, that's how it works.

Justin:

That's how it works?

Sydnee:

Yeah.

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

Yeah.

Justin:

Endoscopy. Um, in endoscopy, there was a spray that uncovered camouflage ulcers. Do you have that?

Sydnee:

No. No. I don't even know how to parse that. No, you just look. Like endoscopy is like, when we take a camera and look.

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

What would they be camouflaged by?

Justin:

Now? When you use an endoscopy thing, do you, um, have to be really careful about bumping in the walls of the patient's internal organs so they don't die?

Sydnee:

[laughs] I mean, you don't wanna push it through the wall of their internal organs.

Justin:

But it's not like a like—

Sydnee:

No, but like it, it's gonna touch things.

Justin:

Um—

Sydnee:

Like it's gonna, it's gonna touch things. It's—

Justin:

So, sadly...

Sydnee:

Yeah. No, that's fine. Just don't push it through the wall and you're cool.

Justin:

Sadly, there have been, been no more trauma team games since or trauma centered games, I guess you could call 'em since, uh, 2010, the series has been... I'm ready for another one though. I think we're—

Sydnee:

I would play that game. I enjoyed it

Justin:

Kinect, stuff like that. VR. Oh yes, please. 2007, hospital—

Sydnee:

They might be too real for some people.

Justin:

Yeah. Am I? Yeah. VR might get in there too.

Sydnee:

It might. Not me, but you know.

Justin:

Hospital Tycoon, uh, you managed a hospital, not unlike Theme Hospital. Um, the player needed to, uh, manage the staff. You ensure patients are cared for. They have the correct treatment facilities. Um, there's new equipment that you buy. Um, this game was critically panned pretty badly and it was notable mainly because, uh, the company that released it, Codemasters, acknowledged that there was a lot of, uh, glitches and bugs in it. And then they acknowledge that they would not be fixing them because it wasn't popular enough.

Sydnee:

I have a problem with the title of this.

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

Hospital Tycoon.

Justin:

Yes.

Sydnee:

If you were going into the healthcare field, I mean any branch, healthcare management included because you want to be a Hospital Tycoon?

Justin:

Well—

Sydnee:

I find that personally offensive.

Justin:

I know what you're saying, but tycoon is like a, it's like a sub-genre of games, like—

Sydnee:

Right. No, I understand 'cause there's like, am... There's like a one for like amusement parks, right?

Justin:

Well there's like, they're actually literally called like... There's like Railroad Tycoon and, and stuff like that. Like other... There's all kinds of Tycoon in—

Sydnee:

I know. But I don't find it... I find that like... Could we leave healthcare out of the tycoon business, please? Could you be a tycoon at something else and then be a helper at medicine?

Justin:

At me—so you want the game to be called Hospital Helper?

Sydnee:

Yes.

Justin:

Fair enough.

Sydnee:

[laughs] I don't know. I don't make the titles. I'm just saying I'm offended by Hospital Tycoon.

Justin:

2009 was perhaps the weirdest, uh, one of these games. Uh, and, uh, it was Grey's Anatomy came out on we and PC, uh—

Sydnee:

As in the TV show?

Justin:

Yes, this is based on the TV show. It's baffling, like it maybe even weirder than the Raya educational series. You make story decision in the game, like Derek wants to just be alone, but you want him to come over and hangout with you. So you have to make a story decision, whether or not you're gonna like flirt or whether or not you're gonna give him the cold shoulder.

But to do this, to make these decisions, you have to play a mini game where you put together a three piece puzzle to like... That is the picture of Meredith doing the thing that is... Like being flirtatious or giving him the cold

shoulder. It's literally three piece puzzle that you assembled to make this choice.

Sydnee:

Right. This sounds as convoluted as the storyline of Grey's Anatomy was at times. So...

Justin:

Uh, there is also surgery in the game as well, but it is nowhere near as robust as, as some of the others.

Sydnee:

Well, that's what... I mean, that's the important thing to know about the life as a doctor is that, I mean every once in a while we're healing patients, but most of the time we're really just obsessing about our own inner turmoil and looking really great in scrubs and also making out in broom closets and also having like parties where you dance and drink bottles of wine at, in your beautiful homes that you afford on your medical residents salaries.

Justin:

Uh, there, uh—

Sydnee:

That's medicine.

Justin:

There's a, uh... This is an all original plot in this game. It's not based on the episodes. It's been based on an outbreak of diphtheria in the hospital and there were some—

Sydnee:

[laughs] Okay.

Justin:

There were sub plot lines like Christina seeking a fellowship, despite Derek's bad review and then catching diphtheria. [laughing] It's literally what the Wikipedia page says.

Sydnee:

Why did she catch diphtheria? Was she not vaccinated?

Justin:

I mean, I don't know Sydnee, I'm not a writer. Um, on—

Sydnee:

Do you—

Justin:

Grey's Anatomy Game.

Sydnee:

But that is, that is a haunting tale that we should remember. We won't catch diphtheria and prevent us from our surgical fellowship if we get vaccinated—

Justin:

Uh—

Sydnee:

... against diphtheria.

Justin:

Real quick. Uh, last one I wanna touch on, uh, is 2013. Um, Surgeon Simulator 2013. Uh, this was great. It was a, it's a parody of games, uh, like Farming Simulator, is what the title is, is referring to, um, or, or Baseball Simulator or whatever. Um, uh, I think there's even a, uh, Cricket Management Simulator, uh, game—

Sydnee:

Mm-hmm.

Justin:

But, uh, it was created during a 48 hour game jam, but then the developer, Bossa Studios spent an extra—additional 48 days turning it into a retail product. You played this one a little bit, uh, it is intentionally really difficult to control.

Sydnee:

Yes, yes.

Justin:

Each of the buttons on the controller, um, uh, uh, are on the keyboard map to a different digit. So each digit of the left hand has its own, um, uh, a button that you have to use to, to grip tools and stuff.

Sydnee:

Yes, that was very difficult.

Justin:

It's actually a Meta gag based on a game called Jurassic Park Trespasser, which was notoriously difficult to control, um, because you... It gave you control over the arms, but it didn't do it especially well. But certain simulator is really funny if you, if you haven't checked it out, it's one of the ones that's worthwhile. Lastly, Big Pharma, 2015 is a game where you manage a pharmaceutical company. It's a simulator where you manage a pharmaceutical company.

Sydnee:

Were they, did they know when they named it that, that that's kind of like a negative...

Justin:

I figure, yeah. Yeah.

Sydnee:

Like when you say Big Pharma, that's like a—

Justin:

It seems—

Sydnee:

... negative conversation.

Justin:

It's tongue and cheek, it seemed like to me, but anyway, those are all the, the medical games that I found. I mean, most of 'em, there's a couple I skipped 'cause they, uh, seem very boring. There's a lot of these that are made like educationally, like, um, that, that were never really widely commercially released.

Sydnee:

Mm-hmm.

Justin:

But um, but I feel like I've covered most of those. That's gonna do for us then.

Sydnee:

Is that it?

Justin:

Yep. That it. Um, do you wanna do the stuff that I normally do? Can you say like thanks to The Taxpayers for letting us use Medicines as the intro and outro of our program?

Sydnee:

Well, can I thank you first?

Justin:

Yeah. Thank you.

Sydnee:

For leading me through all these medical video games?

Justin:

Which one of those, which one would you most wanna play and which one do you most wanna see YouTube video of after we're done?

Sydnee:

I wanna, I wanna play the one about, about my girl Hillary's healthcare system in 1994.

Justin:

[laughs] Okay, perfect. The, the one that looks incredibly boring?

Sydnee:

Can I just say that there should be a game about family medicine?

Justin:

What would it be like?

Sydnee:

Where's my game? Where's my family medicine game?

Justin:

Um—

Sydnee:

There needs to be like we see patients and you spend a lot of time talking and understanding them as individuals and then you make sure that they've gotten all of their appropriate vaccinations and their colonoscopies and their mammograms and their pap smears and their appropriate laboratory testing. And you counsel them on diet and exercise and um, wearing their seatbelt and safe sex.

Justin:

It sounds like Second Life to me, but we'll give it a whirl.

Sydnee:

No, that's my job. [laughs] This is, no, this is my first life. This is my real life that I just described.

Justin:

Thanks.

Sydnee:

Doesn't that sound fun?

Justin:

Um, well, you know, well, we're kind of an alpha stage on family medicine simulator 2016.

Sydnee:

Mm-hmm.

Justin:

So we're, we're gonna keep working out some of the bugs and we'll see, if we can't get it through play testing, just to get some of the rough I deserve.

Sydnee:

If you want real life, test it out. Whether you can come to work with me, never mind. That's a hip of violation.

Justin:

Uh, thank you to maximumfun.org, uh, is, is the website for a Podcast network called Maximum Fun. That .org is not in their title. I tend to forget that a lot of the time.

Sydnee:

[laughs] But if you go to maximumfun.org, you can check out all of the other cool podcasts.

Justin:

Yes. Uh, there, there's a ton of great shows there. Uh, check out Minority Korner, if you need a new one to, to listen to. We had an ad for them, I believe in the last week episode. But, uh, if that wasn't under that episode, you go give that a whirl. There's a ton of great shows. Uh, there's a ton of fun and activities for kids... That, that one's not true.

Sydnee:

That is not true.

Justin:

But there are good podcasts. That's uh, and I believe that is gonna do it for us, folks. Uh, so until—

Sydnee:

Thank you to The Taxpayers for our theme song, Medicines.

Justin:

Good. Yeah. That's exactly it.

Sydnee:

Yeah. You didn't say it.

Justin:

[laughs] Okay.

Sydnee:

You kinda, you said add it.

Justin:

Thanks.

Sydnee:

I fixed it for you.

Justin:

Thanks to you all.

Sydnee:

You're welcome.

Justin:

Until next week, my name is Justin McElroy.

Sydnee:

I'm Sydnee McElroy.

Justin:

And as always—

Sydnee:

Don't drill a hole in your head.

Justin:

See, it's harder than it looks, huh? I have a hard gig.

Sydnee:

[laughs]

[theme music plays]

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