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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Years ago my husband gave me a Fitbit for my birthday. This type of wearable technology was new at the time, and wearing this wristband all day and night felt odd at first. But after several days, I rather liked tracking my steps and discovering new ways to get in those elusive 10,000 steps. Throughout the years since then, I've used mhealth technology apps and platforms for various other reasons — including those discussed in this supplement, “Unregulated Health Research Using Mobile Devices.” Like many, I was unaware of the extent to which my information was likely being collected and analyzed. Fortunately for us, the authors in this supplement have thoroughly examined various aspects of this type of unregulated research and present us with their research and recommendations.

Given that mobile health technology is increasingly occupying the field of health research, we are especially pleased to publish an entire issue on this topic. Guest editors Mark A. Rothstein and John T. Wilbanks and their co-authors address a range of ethical and legal issues that have an impact on the creation of these mhealth technologies, the developers, the participants and investigators, and the regulation of the data and findings. The issue's final article provides ethical considerations and policy recommendations from the team who met with research participant advocates, app developers, and policymakers, among others, to address these issues. Clearly a complex issue that will continue to need guidance, mhealth technology is ripe for these discussions. We are grateful to our authors for upholding scientific principles and providing a collective understanding of the risks, benefits, and ethical and legal considerations needed for its current and future use.

Courtney McClellan
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