

Critical Issues in STS, Graz, Austria, May 2015

Session: 'm-Health and Surveillance: Caring for Data?'

Title: The Quantified Human: on the digitalisation of measuring illness and the body

We humans are increasingly able to quantify, measure, monitor bodily functions closer to and in the body, with cheaper, mobile, quicker and invasive devices. Combining DNA and imaging data with data from biological samples, medical records and lifestyle data on patients and consumers, leads to promises of personalized medicine. These developments allow new actors access into research and therapy, and empower individuals in maintaining a good health or in living with disease.

However, there is also a strong link between selfreporting by patients and the need for big data in biomedical research. Big data has become paramount for the advance of biomedical research. Some of these data comes from the field of selfmanagement, for example from patients with diabetes type I and II, rheumatic arthritis and other. Hence, for biomedical research to advance, input from patients is needed based on selfreports, and given freely. This, however, creates tensions in several areas: the work that is done for measuring does not always benefit those who measure, the goals of measuring may vary per actor and do not always improve care or health. We address these tensions drawing on empirical descriptions of quantification practices from nine empirical cases.

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