

Title: Unobtrusiveness and surveillance in mHealth applications

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Abstract: mHealth is an emerging and rapidly developing field that promises to increase access to care at lower costs and with greater acceptance than traditional healthcare environments currently can. The increased acceptance of mHealth over eHealth or regular care is often related to the diminished obtrusiveness of the device monitoring, coaching, diagnosing, and / or collecting data of its user. However, unobtrusiveness not only has gains, but might also come at a cost. Although one should be careful not to mistake mHealth monitoring for surveillance, the border between unobtrusive monitoring via mHealth and surveillance is not as clear cut as might be suggested. The unobtrusive character of certain mHealth devices, specifically smartphones, have contributed to the increasing ubiquity of surveillance technologies in everyday life. In many mobile health applications users simply have less control of the information they supply and receive as well as the way it will be used. The Orwellian Big Brother looms at the corner when the gathered data is not only used for the joint enterprise of enabling a person to live healthier but for other purposes too. This leads to critical questions such as: whether and how users should be informed about the trade-off they make between unobtrusive monitoring or coaching via mHealth and potential infringement of privacy, loss of autonomy and will-power. Importantly, exploring the relation between unobtrusiveness and surveillance in mHealth demonstrates how people's practices and expectations with respect to privacy and autonomy change in their interaction with the mHealth technology.

Key words: Unobtrusiveness, surveillance, mHealth