

Mobile Health Tracking Apps: Get a Grip On Your Drip

Background:

There are currently more than 325,000 health apps available for mobile phones. Some are designed to work with external devices such as heart monitors and glucose monitors but most rely on user input and tracking data from the phones themselves. One of the largest and fastest growing categories of health apps is “Femtech”. These apps include period trackers and pregnancy apps. These apps and their data policies have come under heavy scrutiny in recent days due to the overturning of Roe v. Wade in the United States.

Pros:

- Mobile health apps collect “real world data” that provides researchers with data that would normally require time, money, and approvals.
- Empower users to find out more about their own bodies and how to take better care of themselves
- Education about womens’ reproductive health is lacking in many parts of the world and these apps bring information to people who wouldn’t otherwise be taught it

Cons:

- Lack of oversight
- Dubious efficacy
- Thinly veiled marketing ploys
- Major Privacy Concerns
- In light of the overturn of Roe v Wade and the possible criminalization of obtaining abortion services, privacy concerns take on a new urgency

Sources:

<https://www.wired.com/story/apple-watch-fertility-features-not-birth-control/>
<https://www.wired.com/story/roe-v-wade-privacy-practices/>
<https://www.texastribune.org/2022/07/25/abortion-prosecution-data-health-care/>
<https://www.annualreviews.org/doi/full/10.1146/annurev-publhealth-052020-103738>
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK137823/>
<https://www.bmj.com/content/373/bmj.n1248>
<https://www.lexisnexis.com/community/insights/legal/practical-guidance-journal/b/pa/posts/the-impact-of-state-laws-criminalizing-abortion>