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Ethics

Summary: Smart Thermometers for Disease Detection

Link: <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/06/06/health/coronavirus-kinsa-thermometer-new-york.html>

Kinsa is an internet connected thermometer that sends your data to Kinsa. It can work just like any thermometer but now if you connect it to your internet, it will send your data to the company. It can include personal info such as your gender, your medications, location, and your internet IP and other information.

The article is NYC sending the thermometers to teachers, staff, and family members in NYC schools. They are hoping it'll be an early warning system for the rest of the system. These can benefit the entire NYC community as a whole as COVID and flu can be spread through schools and to their families. It just gives health officials and families additional information to make the best decision for their health and the school's. Another article using Kinsa to help with disease detection (<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/18/health/coronavirus-fever-thermometers.html>).

However, from Kinsa's privacy policy (<https://kinsahealth.com/privacy-policy>), the company collects a lot of location data. They also collect health data such as medications, gender, and other illnesses. The company says they will only just aggregate the data but many companies have promises strict privacy guidelines to only break them later on. Whether the company is hacked or they willingly break their policy to generate profits, most of the time, the actual person that is harmed will not find out for many years after.

So zooming out to all these new health gadgets such as the Apple Watch and other internet connected devices, are consumers ok with sharing their personal information to these private companies? It'd be nice if there were stronger disclosure laws and penalties associated with consumer information being leaked in a timely manner. However, sharing some information for the common good may be ok with some people.