

OPENING STATEMENT
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House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology
Research and Technology Subcommittee
“Smart Health: Empowering the Future of Mobile Apps”
March 2, 2016

Good morning, I would like to thank the Chair for holding today’s hearing. Today we are examining mobile health apps and the challenges to bringing this technology into wider use. While there may be some regulatory challenges to mobile health app technology, this Committee looks forward to considering the related technological, security, and funding challenges.

The panelists here today are closely involved in the development of this emerging field. These are really exciting and potentially life changing technologies. These mobile health apps and the people behind them represent the kind of innovative technology this Committee works to support through good science and technology policy. The apps developed by our witnesses are also either HIPAA compliant or developed through rigorous university-based research. Unfortunately, however, the apps we will be discussing today represent only a small segment of commercially available mobile health apps.

The mobile health industry is a multi-billion global market and is projected to grow larger as more and more people use them. However, the research behind many health apps is not very strong. In the U.S., federal regulators have taken several mobile health apps off the market that were determined to be deceptive to its users. Online reviews, in many cases, are the only source for potential app users to determine the efficacy of an app before they download it. This should not be the case when users’ health, and possibly even their lives are at stake. There is a role here for both private sector innovation and more basic research and development at our nation’s great universities and federal laboratories. For example, the National Science Foundation’s Smart and Connected Health Program is already supporting important work in this area. Its goal is to accelerate the development of innovative approaches to healthcare to move healthcare away from a reactive environment to one that is preventative, proactive and evidenced-based, focused on well-being rather than disease.

Mobile health technology is moving healthcare management forward at a fast pace. Strong partnerships among federal agencies, universities, and the private sector can help address the barriers and minimize some of the growing pains in mobile health app development. I appreciate our witnesses being here today to share their insights into the innovative technologies made possible by such partnerships.

Thank you Madame Chair, and I yield back the balance of my time.