

## **Prompt**

What do you disagree with in the reading? Why?

Your papers will be read with an eye toward your careful consideration of the reading (you can choose to mention all of them, some of them, or concentrate on just one), how the text/s relate/s to the broader course topics, and must include outside at least one outside reference of your choice that you feel relate to the reading.

Word count: 300 words

In *The Smartphone Psychiatrist*, written by David Dobbs, neuroscientist Tom Insel suggests that the next step in mental health consists of phone apps geared towards those struggling with mental illness. These apps analyze data from smartphone users to distinguish someone slipping into a mental health crisis (Dobbs, 2017). While these mental health apps aim to advise individuals, there is the possibility of the apps doing more harm than good.

There was no mention of how these apps would be regulated. While mental health apps such as 7 Cups, Mindstrong, and Prime were created by reputable scientists, with no government regulation, detrimental advice could lead to crippling consequences. When researchers reviewed over fifty commercially available smartphone apps for people with bipolar disorder, “they found that some presented information that was critically wrong. One, called iBipolar, advised people in the middle of a manic episode to drink hard liquor to help them to sleep, and another, called What is Biopolar Disorder, suggested that bipolar disorder could be contagious” (Anthes, 2016). Along with regulation, comes the issue of medication.

“According to the National Alliance on Mental Health, only 41% of adults in the U.S. with a mental health condition received mental health services in the past year” (“Mental Health,” n.d.). Having dealt with debilitating depression, I fear these apps could persuade individuals to self-diagnose and self-medicate rather than seek professional licensed help. By doing this, people are putting their health at risk.

While Tom Insel’s suggestions for mental health apps seems well-intentioned, there are multiple steps needed to ensure the safety of users. These steps could include the requirement of a doctor’s note before accessing the app, or even regulation through The National Institute of Mental Health in order to better aid the app users and safely support those struggling with mental illness.