

# How to Lower Socioeconomic Inequalities in Health with Digital Therapeutics? Healthification – A Short Animation

Tobias Kowatsch<sup>1,2,3</sup> 

<sup>1</sup>Institute for Implementation Science in Health Care, University of Zurich, Zurich, Switzerland

<sup>2</sup>School of Medicine, University of St.Gallen, St.Gallen, Switzerland

<sup>3</sup>Centre for Digital Health Interventions, D-MTEC, ETH Zurich, Zurich, Switzerland  
tobias.kowatsch@uzh.ch

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**Abstract:** Non-communicable diseases (NCDs), including common mental disorders, impose enormous health burdens on individuals and lead to substantial economic challenges (Jacobson et al., 2022; Kowatsch & Fleisch, 2021). Known risk factors relate primarily to a lifestyle characterized by tobacco and excessive alcohol consumption, physical inactivity, or an unbalanced diet. This lifestyle can lead to obesity, hypertension, and cardiovascular and neurodegenerative diseases. Unfortunately, individuals with lower socioeconomic status (SES) are substantially more affected by NCDs (Mackenbach et al., 2008; Wang & Geng, 2019). These individuals are also underrepresented in clinical and non-clinical trials (Davis et al., 2019; Ford et al., 2008). As a result, health interventions are potentially only effective for individuals with higher SES and do not address those most in need. Therefore, it is essential to understand how to reach and engage individuals with lower SES. To this end, we propose to “hijack” the comfort zones of vulnerable individuals (e.g., television shows and social media) and frame digital therapeutics so that they are primarily scalable (e.g., by using everyday technology, such as smartphones), unobtrusive (e.g., by using digital biomarkers), relatable (e.g., with conversational agents and family members as intervention components), and enjoyable (e.g., by gamified approaches), with health effects being the side effects. A short animation has been produced for the scientific community to promote this perspective and to rethink digital therapeutics aiming to lower socioeconomic inequalities in health (Kowatsch 2022).

**Video Clip:** Kowatsch T. (2022) Healthification, a Short Animation: <https://vimeo.com/748303043>

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## **CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

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