

# Health Apps and Medical Apps - same same, but different? A qualitative analysis of scientific definitions

Laura Maaß<sup>1,2</sup>, Merle Freye<sup>2,3</sup>, Chen-Chia Pan<sup>2,4,5</sup>, Hans-Henrik Dassow<sup>2,6</sup>, Jasmin Niess<sup>2,7</sup>, Tina Jahnel<sup>2,5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Research Center on Inequality and Social Policy University of Bremen, <sup>2</sup>Leibniz ScienceCampus Digital Public Health Bremen, <sup>3</sup>Institute for Information, Health and Medical Law University of Bremen, <sup>4</sup>Leibniz Institute for Prevention Research and Epidemiology, <sup>5</sup>Institute for Public Health and Nursing University of Bremen, <sup>6</sup>Institute for Philosophy University of Bremen, <sup>7</sup>Human-Computer-Interaction University St. Gallen,

## Background and Study Aim

The differentiation between health apps (HA) and medical apps (MA) is still unclear.

Therefore, this study aims to:

- Overview and analyse HA and MA definitions
- Analyse how the Germany-specific cases digital health application (DiGA) and digital care application (DiPA) fit into this context
- Design an interdisciplinary decision-flow chart to distinguish between HA and MA (see QR-code)



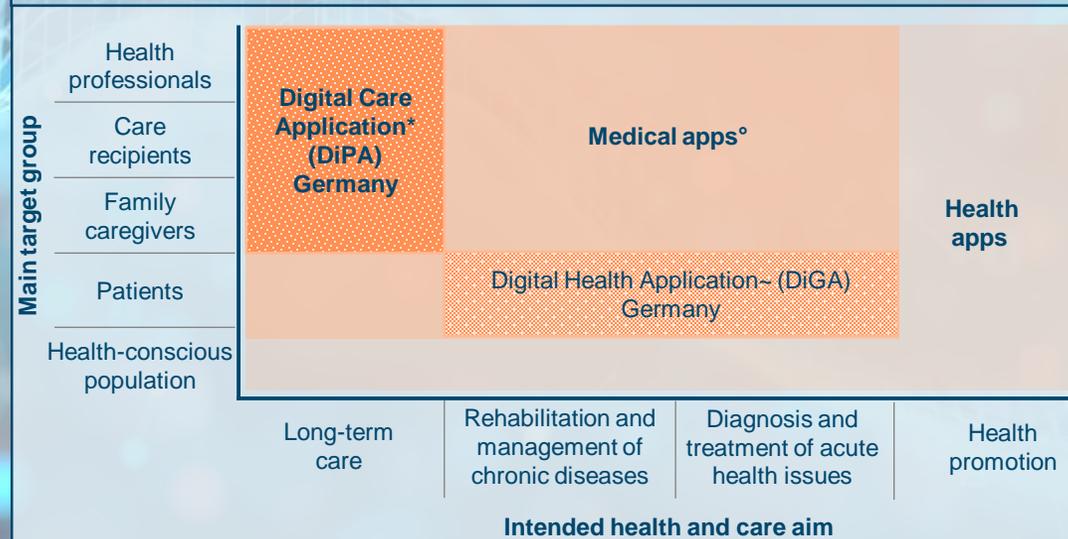
## Methods

- Literature search in PubMed, Cochrane Library, Web of Science, Beck-Online, Juris, and Google Scholar
- Backward and forward snowball search<sup>5</sup>
- Qualitative analysis with MAXQDA

## Results

- 24 HA definitions included: the app's aim (22), user (14), collected health data (14), health definition, technical device (12), technical functions (9), missing regulation (2)
- 11 MA definitions included: the app's aim (10), the user (9), technical device (3), regulation (2), technical functions (2), and collected data (1)

## Health apps, medical apps, DiGA and DiPA



<sup>o</sup>Can be affected by medical device regulation as intended use for medical purposes.  
 ~Regulated by section 33a of volume 5 of the German Social Insurance Code (§33a SGB V) and the Digital Health Applications Regulation (DiGAV) as low-risk mobile medical devices in Germany only.  
 \*Regulated by section 40a of volume 11 of the German Social Insurance Code (§ 40a SGB XI) in Germany only.

## Top 3 definition themes

### Health Apps

**Data collection**  
Health behaviour, physical activity, diet  
**2**

**Aim**  
Health promotion, fitness, wellness  
**1**

**Definition of health**  
According to WHO (1948)  
**3**

### Medical Apps

**Primary User**  
Professionals, Patients  
**2**

**Aim**  
Treatment, self-management, Diagnosis  
**1**

**Regulation**  
Regulated as a medical device  
**3**

## Conclusion

- HA and MA are software programs on mobile devices that process<sup>6</sup> health-related data on or for their user (process is defined according to the General Data Protection Regulation).
- HA target health-conscious people, while MA focus on health professionals, patients, caregivers
- HA include 1st, 2nd, and 3rd level of prevention, whereas MA target 2nd and 3rd prevention

1. Wohlin, C. (2014). Guidelines for snowballing in systematic literature studies and a replication in software engineering. In Association for Computing Machinery (edit.). Proceedings of the 18th International Conference on Evaluation and Assessment in Software Engineering (EASE '14) (Article 38, 1-10). New York, Association for Computing Machinery  
 2. Regulation (EU) 2016/679 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Directive 95/46/EC (General Data Protection Regulation), 4 GDPR. Sect. 2 (2016).