

digital health market size and demand is predicted to continue for the foreseeable future.

The Condition-Specific Problem

There is no doubt that digital health is here to stay and offers essential fixes to everyday healthcare problems. But for many companies in this industry, the strategy has been to identify a single, significant problem and build a solution to fix it. The issue is that healthcare has so many problems that need solving, and they are not all independent of one another. The outcome of this early digital health trend to focus on a single condition or disease is the development of many valuable but siloed technology solutions with a high degree of specificity.

The overwhelming number of condition-specific solutions that are now available contribute obvious challenges for both clinical workflows and patients. For clinicians, the frustration stems from having multiple platforms or technologies that don't effectively "talk" to one another. In response, technologies are increasingly being crafted with interoperability in mind. However, there is still much work to be done to achieve a place of harmony among the multitude of digital health solutions.

For patients, the frustration comes from the overwhelming number of applications needed to support their journey to better health. Naturally, this frustration can lead to "app fatigue." App fatigue is exactly what you think - the phenomenon by which customers become overwhelmed with the number of applications they have or need (plus the notifications they get from those applications) such that they choose not to download or engage with the app(s) anymore.

So what does app fatigue look like for healthcare consumers and why does it happen? To get the complete picture, let's consider an isolated example. Joe is a veteran who recently retired from the U.S. Army. He gets his healthcare through the VA and generally tries to take advantage of all the tools available to lead a healthier lifestyle. He has a diagnosis of insomnia, PTSD, and high blood pressure. His goals this year are to quit smoking and increase his physical activity.

The VA offers several resources for him - a PTSD Coach, an Insomnia Coach, Mental Health Check-up, Stay Quit Coach, and a Move Coach. In fact, the VA offers 22 different apps to help him manage his conditions and reach his goals. So Joe has to enter at least four applications to treat his insomnia, take care of his mental health, track his exercise, and access his quit support resources.

Consider for a moment how hard it can be, in the best of circumstances, to make the right decisions for your health. There are already many barriers to ditching unhealthy habits, adopting healthy ones, and making lifestyle changes. Do we really think that the need for four different applications won't contribute another obstacle to success?

In defense of the VA, it appears that they have caught onto this potential challenge for veterans and do offer a "launchpad" feature that allows veterans to find and launch the app they need more easily. But, I use this example because we can already see this problem come to life even in an isolated use case with a single healthcare provider organization and a small sample size of VA-only apps.

Everything gets substantially more complicated when considering the total number of medical and health applications available to the larger public. According to [Statista](#), in 2021, there were a staggering 53,979 iOS medical and health apps in the iOS store. So many of these applications are specific to a single condition. In fact, for diabetes alone, there are at least 14 high-popularity apps and countless less-popular options specific to diabetes management. On top of these publicly available apps, most health systems now each have a patient portal application that patients also need to access.

The Multiple Conditions Problem

We could look at this high volume of apps and options as capitalism at work. Still, this amount of choice gets out of hand when we consider that many Americans also have multiple medical conditions to manage. Multiple apps for each condition plus multiple conditions equals too many apps.

According to [the CDC](#), 6 in 10 Americans have one chronic condition, and a shocking 4 in 10 Americans have multiple chronic conditions. So around 40% of Americans regularly juggle two or more chronic/complex health conditions. We add even more applications to the mix when we consider that most people have other general health and wellness goals that necessitate additional diet/nutrition, fitness, lifestyle, mental health, and other general wellness applications.

So if we continue on this trend of offering disease-specific applications, most Americans are looking at needing a small collection of applications to manage their health conditions and wellness goals. Is this really feasible? Think about it: do you have a hard time remembering all of the log-in info for the many different apps you use daily? I know that I do. And how do we

accommodate the large population of Americans with low digital literacy and limited digital resources?

These are important questions that need answering. As these problems with "app fatigue" and complex care coordination come to light, some argue that a shift in the digital health industry's mindset is necessary. Instead of asking what specific problems need solving, digital health companies and clinicians should instead ask what digital experiences will be the most convenient and effective for healthcare consumers.

The Shift: Patient-Centric Over Condition Centric

This tangled web of applications for health management is not sustainable in the long term. If digital health is to be successful in improving the healthcare experience, the shift from condition-centric solutions to patient-centric solutions must happen. At Fitango, we've designed our solution to be flexible and condition-agnostic for that very reason.

At Fitango, our mission is to give providers all the tools they need to coordinate digital care for their patients, no matter how many conditions they manage. For this reason, our solution is relevant across all specialties and helps promote personalized, connected digital health experiences for patients.

If we refer back to Joe, our earlier example, the vision is that he has a single log-in to a health application that presents a visually appealing and easy-to-use health dashboard. Joe's dashboard contains all of the resources he needs to manage every aspect of his health. His provider might prescribe interactive PTSD, insomnia, and blood pressure management programs. On the same application, Joe also has access to a robust library of health and wellness materials in the Wellness store. Here he can engage in self-directed learning and self-select healthy lifestyle programs to help him quit smoking and increase his physical activity— a personalized, one-stop-shop for a wide variety of health condition education and general wellness resources.

The benefits of offering an integrated solution like this are not just to reduce patient frustration but more importantly, to reduce barriers to healthy choices, and improve health outcomes. If we know that improving care plan understanding and adherence can lead to better health outcomes, we must do everything we can to make adherence simple and easy for patients. The user experience for patients and health consumers is of utmost importance. Even if a patient has a great experience on each condition-specific application individually, their frustration and app fatigue over time is likely to spoil it for everyone.

Now, I am not implying that we, at Fitango, have it all figured out. This shift towards digital health consumerism and a patient-centric healthcare ecosystem remains a complex problem. For example, how do we handle instances where patients see specialists in another health system? At this point, accessing materials provided by two different health systems would still require separate log-ins, which is not ideal. But with HIPAA, regulatory, and security concerns - is a truly connected, consumer-centric healthcare experience possible? Stay tuned for how Fitango and other companies in the digital health industry respond to unfolding health consumerism initiatives and attempt to help solve some of healthcare's most complex digital patient care issues.