Your Data

It's Out There

Common online activities produce data that benefit individuals and public health, but also leave a trail. Kate and Jermaine are fictional, but third-party use of personal data is real.

Kate manages her chronic disease well.

- She participates in a clinical trial, entering her health data in a website daily.
- Researchers can quickly aggregate and mine the data in search of a cure.
- Kate uses an app for mood tracking and chats with other patients on a social network.
- She fills prescriptions online and shops at stores that offer loyalty discounts.
- She uses a credit card to buy books about her condition.
- A data analytics firm provides Kate's data to some large employers in her area.

Kate does not know that the company reviewing her application for a new job has access to her personal information.

Jermaine is a healthy nonsmoker.

- His employer offers a non-smoking incentive, a discount on his health premium.
- He gets a blood test at a lab. Results show he has high cholesterol.
- He must sign an agreement allowing his data to be shared with third parties.
- He visits his doctor and fills a prescription for cholesterol-lowering medication.
- Jermaine chats on Facebook about getting his cholesterol down.
- A data analytics firm blends his data, labeling him "Ethnic Second City Struggler."

Jermaine is unaware that his bank has access to his personal information while considering his application for a second mortgage.

The amount of information we give the world in our daily lives offers many benefits, but it also poses potential risks.

Sources:
- Source 4: “For more information, see Here’s Looking at You: How Personal Health Information Is Being Tracked and Used.” www.chef.gov/publications/2014/idt Items look by personal health info...