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### Design speaks

*Improving patient-centeredness for older people in a digitalizing healthcare context*

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## Preface

To begin with, I will explain my thesis in a generic way. In my thesis you will find information about three things that are probably familiar to most of you. Firstly, digital technologies that many of us use nowadays. Such as apps and the internet on smartphones, tablets and regular computers. Secondly, older people. Your mother or father, or perhaps your grandmother. And thirdly, health. Maintaining healthy. I have combined these aspects in my research. Because my goal is to design digital health technologies for older patients, for example an iPhone app to help patients with taking the right pills at the right time, which interact and communicate with older people naturally and easily.

My research focused on identifying the positive aspects that support the use of digital health technologies by older patients, as well as the barriers that older people may experience on this matter. I think it is important that we get sight on both these positive and negative aspects within the context of our aging populations. Healthcare is faced with big challenges because of people getting older. There will be a lot of older people living with health problems that cannot be fully cured, such as diabetes or heart problems. Costs will rise and there will not be enough staff to take care of all older patients. The promise of digital health technologies is that they can be a solution to those challenges. They can help patients, especially chronically ill patients, and lower costs. To make those promises a reality, we have to get sight on what makes older people with a (chronic) condition embrace the benefits of these technologies as well as what stops older people from using them. We can apply these learnings in designing digital health technologies that are better suited to older people's needs and preferences.

The way I see it, at the moment these digital health technologies are best compared to a wild forest in spring. Full of tall leafy green trees, colorful wildflowers starting to blossom and beautiful mushrooms as hidden gems under the logs. A trail may be there, but it is unclear. There are no good places to take a rest and there is a risk of getting lost. Younger people may want to explore this place, an adventure! And older people may want to enjoy the nature in this forest as well, but it is less easy for them. From the older patients giving their input for my research, I hear that most of them do want to go into that forest, they want to use these technologies. Yet, as their mobility and capacities decrease with age, they have more fear for the consequences of getting lost and thus explore less. They request more guidance and more recognizable places to rest when needed. So my goal is to map the forest, to help making the trail more clear and to create rest places along there. In such a way that older people can also fully enjoy this forest. In such a way that these digital health technologies, become more easy to use and more effective to use for older patients.