

## **Digital Health Privacy in the COVID Era and Beyond**

**Presented by Ari Friedman and Matthew McCoy**

### **Abstract:**

The internet provides ready access to critical information related to COVID-19. With a simple web search, individuals can find symptom checkers, locate testing sites, and obtain tips for keeping themselves and their families safe. However, online information-seeking related to COVID-19 may also carry privacy risks. Prior research has shown that when individuals seek health information online, webpages they visit frequently contain code that initiates data transfers to third parties, such as online advertisers. When tracking data are aggregated and combined with personally identifiable information held by advertising and social media companies, they can reveal sensitive details about specific individual's health conditions and concerns. In this talk, we review results from a study that assessed online tracking related to COVID webpage, and put COVID privacy risks in the context of internet-scale tracking of consumer searches for health information.

### **Bios:**

Ari B. Friedman is an Assistant Professor of Emergency Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania, holds a secondary appointment in the Department of Medical Ethics and Health Policy, is Core Faculty at the Center for Emergency Care Policy and Research, and is a Senior Fellow of the Leonard Davis Institute of Health Economics. His research investigates the unscheduled care system (primary care clinics, urgent care and retail clinics, telemedicine, and emergency departments)'s impact on access to care, finances, and health outcomes particularly aging patients. His work has been cited more than 1,500 times, with an h-index of 14, and has been published in journals such as Health Affairs, The New England Journal of Medicine, JAMA, Annals of Emergency Medicine, and JAMA Internal Medicine. Ari completed his M.D. at the Perelman School of Medicine of the University of Pennsylvania, his Ph.D. in Healthcare Management and Economics at the Wharton School, and his residency at the Harvard Affiliate Emergency Medicine Residency at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center.

Matthew McCoy, PhD is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Medical Ethics and Health Policy. His research focuses on conflicts of interest in medicine and science and the ethics of public engagement in health policy making. He is particularly interested in conflicts of interest among patient advocacy organizations and other actors that claim to represent patients or the public in health policy debates. His recent work on these topics has been published in JAMA and the New England Journal of Medicine. His other research interests include health care resource allocation and the political representation of people with limited cognitive capacity. Matthew received a PhD in political theory from Princeton University in 2015. He was a postdoctoral fellow in the Department of Medical Ethics and Health Policy from 2015 to 2017.