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# The HealthTech Weekly

August 7, 2018

## Spotlight on: Stephen Smagula, PhD

Core Faculty Member [Stephen Smagula, PhD](#) is an Assistant Professor of Psychiatry and Epidemiology at the University of Pittsburgh. He examines the neurobiology, psychosocial factors, and rest-activity rhythms that contribute to late-life depression and is developing a program to monitor sleep-wake patterns on the Apple Watch.



See a preview of our interview with Dr. Smagula below, visit our website for the [full interview](#), and read his [latest publication](#) to learn more!

**Julia: What are activity rhythms? What does a normal 24-hour activity rhythm look like?**

Stephen: People don't often think about it, but it's really simple- activity follows a circadian rhythm. You have a period of inactivity, you usually transition pretty quickly,

then you have a period of activity, and that repeats. So actigraphy shows those repetitive cycles of activity which have a lot of characteristics. How stable is the rhythm across days? How consistent is it within days? How strong is it? What's the shape? What's the timing? People are collecting these measures with research actigraphs and wearables like the Fitbit and Apple Watch. The essence of a healthy rhythm is getting going in the morning at a pretty decent speed- you're not lingering between states of activity and inactivity. Once you become active, you have a wide period of relatively consistent activity. A good, healthy rhythm shows someone who's really engaged with the activities of human life.



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