There are numerous participatory health initiatives underway ranging from light-touch to heavy engagement including social media, mobile health applications, personal health records, consumer genomics, health social networks, and crowdsourced health studies. Crowd-sourced health studies are emerging as an important new investigatory tool in a multi-tier research ecosystem that includes quantified self-experimentation, participant-organized studies, and traditional researcher-led clinical trials. Accessing crowd-sourced cohorts for health studies is a significant emerging opportunity that could have a positive impact on public health research, particularly as outcomes are shifting to the personalized, preventive medicine of the future.

Melanie Swan is an applied genomics expert. She founded the participatory medicine research organization DIYgenomics in 2010. Her educational background includes an MBA in Finance and Accounting from the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, a BA in French and Economics from Georgetown University, and recent coursework in biology, physics, nanotechnology, and philosophy. She is an Instructor at Singularity University and an Affiliate Scholar at the Institute for Ethics and Emerging Technologies. She speaks French, Spanish, and Portuguese, and enjoys reading and international travel. Recent publications and press mentions are available at www.DIYgenomics.org.