



# Wellbeing on the Front Line: Global Wellness Summit 2020

## Consumer Attitudes

Adopting a hybrid in-person and virtual format for 2020, the **Global Wellness Summit** (November 9-11, Palm Beach FL) saw experts discuss how Covid-19 has amplified self-care's significance – merging it with healthcare and highlighting the need for democratised access. We unpack the key growth areas and strategies for steering wellbeing through the pandemic era and beyond.

# Summary

## A Well-Modelled Conference

The Global Wellness Summit was an in-person event with a digital offering for global attendees. While Covid-19 cases **skyrocket across America**, the organisers collaborated with Dr. Richard Carmona, America's 17th Surgeon General of the US, to develop a responsible health-and-safety programme and model event protocols for the new-normal.

## Wellness' Expanded Purview

Despite the enormous losses the pandemic has wrought, speakers underlined that the attention to wellness from across industries offers a silver-lining; sectors like healthcare and fitness now fall under wellbeing's remit. "Thanks to Covid, [wellness] has rocket fuel urgency to it," said Melisse Gelula, co-founder of US website **Well + Good**.

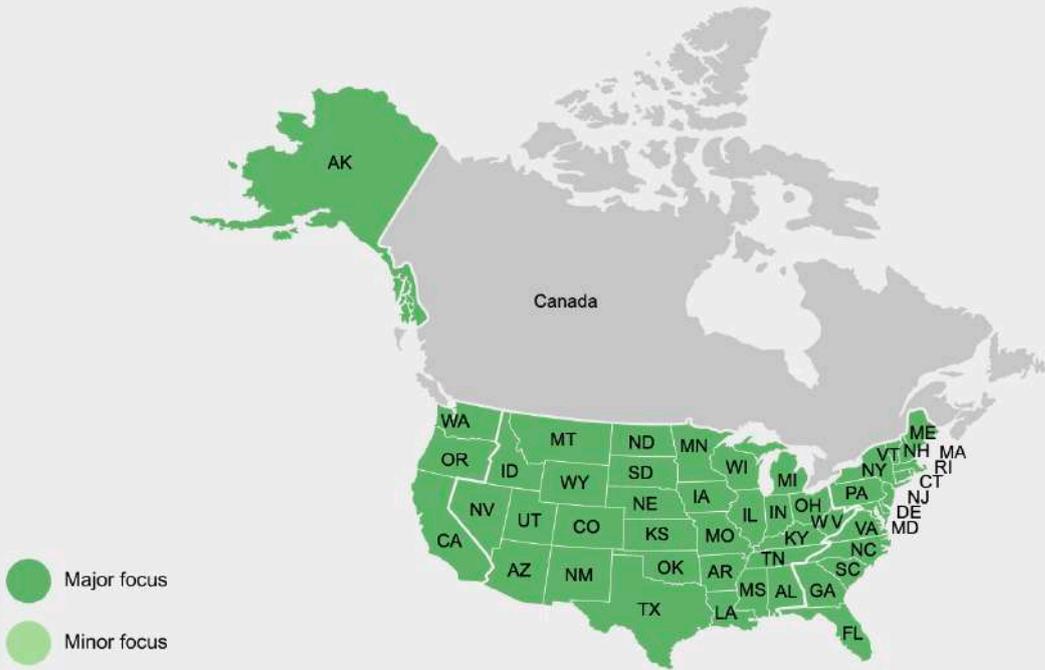
## Democratised Models & Access

Panellists agreed that the logistical and financial roadblocks to care bolstered by Covid-19 reinforce the need for accessible wellness resources across populations. Inclusion can be improved through digital tools and compassionate, contextual approaches to care – like the American Heart Association's care guide for transgender patients, or Adventists Health's new in-home treatment model.

## The Social Factor

"What have we missed most during this era of social distancing? A sense of connection and belonging to a greater purpose," reflected Zev Suissa, chief innovation officer at US meditation service **eMindful**. Several speakers flagged that wellness has a mandate to foster community cohesion, whether through digital therapy or inter-personal empathy.

**At A Glance** The Regional Focus of this Report – USA



- Major focus
- Minor focus

**Relevant Industries**

- Architecture/Design
- Fitness/Sports/Outdoor
- Health/Pharma
- Home/Interiors
- Consumer Attitudes
- Relationships & Families

**Trend Duration**



**Innovation Platforms**



**Key Stats**

<b>52%</b>	More than half of GWS participants were attending the event for the first time
<b>80%</b>	The majority of Americans (80%) don't yet belong to a gym
<b>48m</b>	Over 48 million people in 24 countries have viewed US gym brand Planet Fitness' free Facebook Live workouts since mid-March
<b>24%</b>	Almost a quarter of Planet Fitness' new app users (accessing on-demand workouts) during the pandemic were not members of its physical gyms
<b>40%</b>	Two-fifths of Americans have experienced mental health struggles during Covid-19
<b>\$121bn</b>	The global market for mental wellness was worth \$121bn in 2020

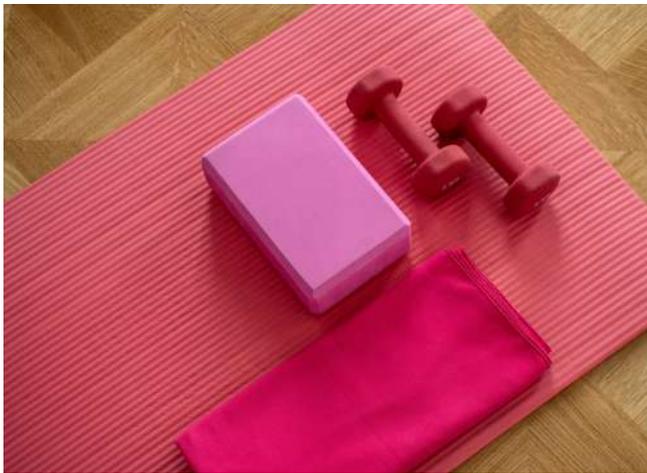


In mid-March... the world became radically proactive and prevention-focused overnight. It became serious, and about survival. It's less a luxury-lifestyle, more a lifeline.

**Beth McGroarty**, VP, Research & Forecasting, Global Wellness Summit



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## A Well-Modelled Conference

The Global Wellness Summit (GWS) was an in-person event at **The Breakers** resort in Palm Beach, Florida with a digital offering for global attendees. While Covid-19 cases **skyrocket across America**, the organisers collaborated with Dr. Richard Carmona, the 17th surgeon general of the US, to develop a responsible health-and-safety programme and model event protocols for the new normal.

In-person delegates underwent a complimentary Covid-19 test upon arrival (all tested negative) and paid tests upon departure. Guests and speakers wore masks within the conference room, while infrared light portals at entryways removed viral load from skin and clothing. See **Covid-19 Compliance** for more on pandemic-era health tech.

This hybrid model showed promising uptake, with 52% of participants attending for the first time. For more on next-gen events, see **Experiential Marketing Summit 2020**.

## Wellness' Expanded Purview

Despite the enormous losses the pandemic has wrought, speakers underlined that the attention to wellness from across industries offers a silver lining. Sectors like healthcare and fitness now fall under wellbeing's remit. "Thanks to Covid, [wellness] has rocket fuel urgency to it," said Melisse Gelula, co-founder of US website **Well + Good**.

- **Healthcare's Pleasurable & Preventative New Guise:** Echoing themes discussed at Stylus' own **summit**, GWS panellists agreed that ongoing health crises – from Covid-19 to obesity – have conditioned consumers and industry professionals to appreciate care that merges science-backed interventions with softer self-care strategies.

"Healthcare was quite sterile [before], so it created the opportunity for wellness to come in and be that cool kid," said Cecelia Girr, senior cultural strategist at US advertising agency **TBWA/Chiat/Day**. "The players who combine the pleasurable parts of wellness with the science and credibility of healthcare will win big."

This overlap is leading individuals to prioritise preventative measures over reactionary treatment. "People are more likely to do something nice for themselves rather than prevent something bad," said the summit's co-founder, Susie Ellis.

- **Personalised Patient-Centricity:** Speakers predicted that healthcare’s integration with wellness will spark a new era of personalised medicine, a theme we discuss in our Spotlight Trend [The Healthcare Opportunity](#). “Personalised is the future for all industries; wellness has always been personalised,” said Dilip Barot, founder of Florida hotel [Amrit Ocean Resort](#).

On an individual level, tools like [Fitv](#), a remote personal training start-up from Israel, enable users to get real-time, individualised feedback on their exercise form.

There’s also potential to invest in hyper-focused group services. “Wellness apps are targeting individual communities and communicating to those communities in a more effective way,” said Amanda Eilian, co-founder of NYC health-focused VC fund [Able Partners](#). Eilian pointed to the recently launched mental health platforms from US wellness brands [Hims](#) and [Hers](#) – tailored to men’s and women’s needs respectively – as well as US paediatric mental health app [Little Otter](#).

- **The Fitness Factor:** Exercise and physical conditioning is also blending with wellness, according to panellists. “Fitness is an integral part of the healthcare delivery system,” argued Chris Rondeau, chief executive of US gym [Planet Fitness](#). “We’re about preventative healthcare, giving people a better life and improving wellbeing.”

To ensure this message reaches the 80% of Americans who don’t belong to a gym ([Planet Fitness, 2020](#)), Planet Fitness launched free workouts on Facebook Live in mid-March; they’ve garnered over 48 million viewers in

24 countries. The gym also rolled out a digital fitness platform in 2019, which lets members and non-members access on-demand workouts. Following pandemic gym closures, 24% of new app users were not Planet Fitness members, presenting a clear route to membership growth.

Brands are also weaving fitness into daily routines, a habit Israel-based start-up [Seatback](#) addresses with its smart seat cushion. The cushion sends feedback to adjust the user’s posture throughout the day. Users can also access a library of chair workouts designed to improve posture long-term.

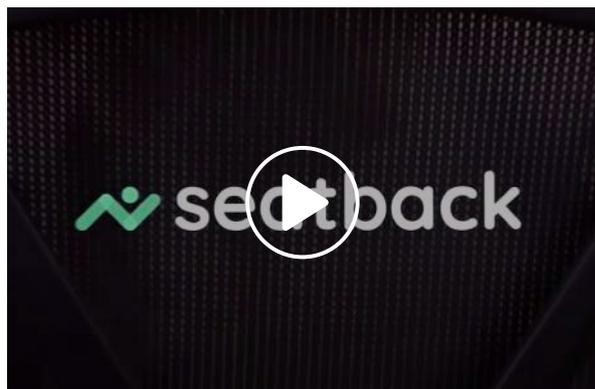
- **Wellness for the Planet:** Environmental wellbeing is another facet of the industry garnering greater attention, as consumers seek to purify and protect their surroundings. Attendees heard about Italian designer [Carlo Ratti](#)’s sanitising wardrobe inserts, [Pura-Case](#), and the [1,000 trees project](#) in Shanghai by British architect [Thomas Heatherwick](#) – a recent guest on our podcast [Future Thinking](#).

“Sustainability, indoor air quality and employee wellbeing are now our highest priorities. Pre-Covid, they were our lowest priorities,” noted Jeffrey Abramson, partner at US real estate development [The Tower Companies](#). GWS’s Ellis echoed this priority switch, admitting that it’s “something [the Global Wellness Summit] hasn’t done so well up to this point.”

As we explain on [The Brief](#), an emphasis on eco-friendly and regenerative practices will define wellness tourism moving forward.



Join this Seated Full Body Workout with PF Trainer Jeremy © Planet Fitness



Enrich engagement, and Infuse Wellness into your company culture with Seatback! © Seatback info



[Digital] is going to democratise the wellness industry. We built our businesses on early adopters and the wealthy. But wellness needs to go out to billions more people, and it will.

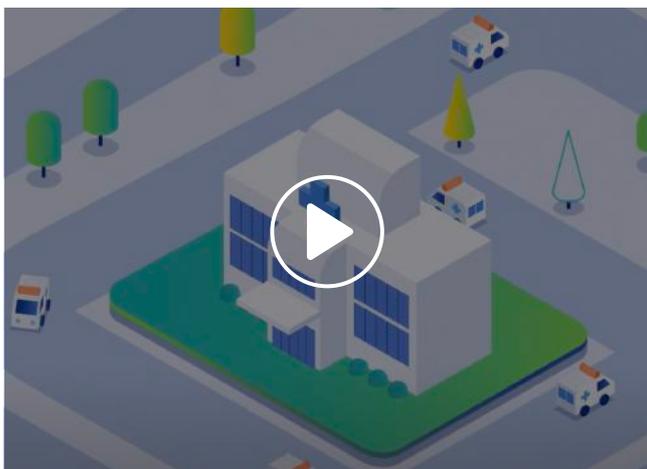
**Rick Stollmeyer**, Founder, Mindbody



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How Virtual Hospitals Work © Medically Home

## Democratised Models & Access

Panellists agreed that the logistical and financial roadblocks to care created by Covid-19 have underlined the importance of accessible wellness tools. They argued that inclusion can be improved through digital tools and compassionate, contextual approaches to care.

- **Digital's Equity Imperative:** As we explain in [Healthcare's High-Tech Future](#), the pandemic rendered access to telehealth services an essential benefit. "Telehealth is here to stay," said Eilian. Nevertheless, she lamented how few start-ups address accessibility and affordability. "Only a few are working with [Medicaid](#) at the early stages."

But [Poppy Seed Health](#), a US telehealth service for pregnant and post-partum mothers, bases its business model on access. "We're not doing tech because it's cool; we're doing it because it's an intervention point for accessibility and equitability. Sometimes it's the only access point that you have," said Simone Taitte, the company's founder.

Pamela Garmon Johnson, vice president for health equity at nonprofit [American Heart Association](#), added that digital consultations also improve care for people who live in rural communities and face lengthy trips to reach specialists.

- **Culturally Competent Care:** Panellists advocated for a wellness industry that acknowledges social and cultural determinants of health, reflecting discussions in [Covid-19 + Inequality](#) and [Decolonising Wellness](#).

"Providers have the responsibility to provide culturally competent care to a patient, whether they look like them or not," said Elizabeth Aquino, an associate professor at [DePaul University's](#) School of Nursing in Chicago. "It's important that individuals have the skillset to take care of all patients."

To address gaps within the healthcare system for LGBTQ+ individuals, the American Heart Association has developed a care guide to raise awareness of this community's [specific risk factors](#), such as higher rates of high-blood pressure, tobacco use and insomnia.

- **At-Home Care:** "Home is the next frontier as a healthcare place," said Bill Wong, president of West Coast hospital group [Adventist Health](#). In May, the company began a partnership with US start-up [Medically Home](#) to bring monitoring equipment, doctor consultations and therapy treatments to participating patients' home addresses.



You don't have to have a mental illness to not be mentally well. Mental wellness can coexist with mental illness.

**Ophelia Yeung**, Senior Research Fellow, GWI



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Staying Mindful in the Midst of Challenging Times  
© The Center For Mind-Body Medicine

## The Social Factor

“What have we missed most during this era of social distancing? It’s a sense of connection and belonging to a greater sense of purpose,” reflected Zev Suissa, chief innovation officer at US meditation service **eMindful**. Speakers agreed that wellness has a mandate to foster community cohesion, whether that be through digital group therapy or empathy.

- **Destigmatising Mental Care:** At the summit, the **Global Wellness Institute** (GWI) announced it would be tracking mental wellness as a new industry sector – a timely move given that 40% of Americans report mental health struggles during Covid-19 (**CDC**, 2020). The initiative will assess the tools helping consumers to build resiliency and positive coping methods, regardless of whether or not they have a diagnosable mental health condition.

It came as GWI’s senior research fellow Ophelia Yeung spoke of misconceptions around the topic: “There’s a tendency to think about mental health as a continuum from mental wellness to mental illness.” Currently, the global market for mental wellness is worth \$121bn (**GWI**, 2020).

- **Togetherness Therapy:** Vivek Murthy, co-chair of President-Elect Joe Biden’s Covid-19 Task Force, discussed the importance of social cohesion for wellbeing – a topic he unravels in his April-published book **Together**. “The goal is not to not be lonely, but to enhance all the social connections we have in our life,” said Murthy.

Digital group therapy is one tool that might help. “For some people who are very shy, it’s easier to be intimate online,” said Dr. James Gordon, founder of US therapy service **The Center for Mind-Body Medicine**. Its digital group therapy sessions for Covid-19 first responders had seen great success, Gordon added. For more, see **Gen Lonely**.



There are few medicines more powerful than love, compassion and kindness. We all have the ability to dispense these medicines.

**Vivek Murthy**, Co-Chair, US Covid-19 Task Force

- **In-Person Pivots to Premium:** Speakers predicted that mounting reliance on digital platforms will raise the value of in-person services. “All of the wellness industry needs to raise prices on face-to-face experiences,” suggested Rick Stollmeyer, founder of US fitness booking system **MindBody**. “It’s two completely different experiences when you’re in-person versus when you’re remote.”
- **Broaching Tough Topics:** Addressing the **death-positive** movement **previously covered** on Stylus, Shoshana Ungerleider, founder of California group **End Well Project**, urged people to “embrace dying not as a

medical event, but a universally shared life experience”. Recently launched US therapy service **Mettle Health** aims to normalise end-of-life discussions via digital access to palliative care experts.

The service gives structured ways to discuss end-of-life for both the grieving and those facing their own death. “Our technology far outpaces our social evolution, our moral evolution,” said founder BJ Miller. “The rest of society hasn’t advanced to make the space for the resources of people who are living longer.”



© Artem Kovalev

# Future Insights

## **Speak Like a Wellness Business**

With heightened consumer sensitivity around personal health, every company must help individuals protect their wellbeing. Seize the moment by using self-care discussions to propel new customer conversations. Identify how your company can help consumers adopt positive lifestyle habits, whether through community connection, self-awareness or movement.

## **Treat Wellness as a Spectrum**

Avoid the temptation to see wellness as something an individual does or doesn't possess. Instead, position self-care as an ongoing practice. Emphasise the continual nature of wellbeing to give customers a renewable reason to return to your brand services, and reflect the lived experience of health, which is always in flux.

## **Enhance Accessibility**

Ensure all populations have access to brand services by optimising products for easy use. Whether that means investing in digital development or partnering with companies that will help budget-conscious users, Covid-accentuated equalities call for self-care tools that are conceived to be used by all, not just the wealthy.

## **Attend to Soft Social Needs**

Get serious about your audience's need for social connection and cohesion, especially critical given continued social distancing. Take a page from The Center for Mind-Body Medicine and devise digitised group formats to bring services directly to customers. Step back from broadcasting brand messages and let participants connect with each other.

Please think before you print.

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