

Closing the Proof Gap

How Evidence Builds Trust,
Drives Growth, and Sets
Market Leaders Apart

Closing the Proof Gap: How evidence builds trust, drives growth, and sets market leaders apart

Innovation is exploding in digital health and wellness, but proof hasn't kept up. Every week brings new tools, platforms, and promises to improve well-being. But as saturation sets in, stakeholders are asking: Does it work? Can we trust it? Is it worth it?

The result? A growing "proof gap" is emerging in the space between bold claims and hard evidence. In a crowded, high-stakes market, it's no longer enough to be novel. You have to be credible.

Fit Minded helps companies close the proof gap by embedding scientific thinking into fast-moving teams. We generate real-world evidence, uncover what drives meaningful change, and translate findings into strategic direction. Over the last three years, we've done exactly that, helping companies across health, wellness, and behavioral innovation earn trust and lead markets.

Executive Summary

The pace of innovation in health and wellness is accelerating, but the evidence to support it hasn't kept up. As new tools and platforms flood the market, stakeholders are asking harder questions: Does it work? Can we trust it? Is it worth it?

This widening gap between promise and proof is more than a credibility issue: it's a growth barrier.

Over the past three years, Fit Minded has partnered with digital health and wellness companies to close this "proof gap" by embedding science into every stage of the business. From shaping clinical models to strengthening go-to-market messaging, these partnerships have produced 37 peer-reviewed studies, dozens of strategic insights, and measurable outcomes that have supported product development, payer conversations, and investor traction.

This white paper celebrates that impact by focusing on the peer-reviewed publications we've generated, sharing what's possible when science becomes a core part of your growth strategy.

For companies navigating a crowded market, this paper offers more than proof: it offers a path forward.

INSIDE YOU'LL FIND

A synthesis of peer-reviewed results Fit Minded has generated with companies, showing measurable clinical outcomes, rapid improvement, and real-world effectiveness

Examples of evidence revealing what drives change, and how those insights have been used to inform product design, engagement, and clinical frameworks

Evidence of user engagement, retention, and value used to demonstrate product-market fit

Examples of evidence companies have used to shape messaging, inform strategy, and align teams around what works

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Letter from Leadership

Three years ago, I launched Fit Minded with one goal: to help companies in digital health and wellness use science not as a checkbox, but as a catalyst for growth.

After decades in academia and industry, I saw firsthand how hard it can be for fast-moving teams to access real scientific insight, especially in ways that align with product goals, timelines, and business needs. I knew there had to be a better way to bridge rigor and relevance, to turn real-world data into strategic advantage. That vision became Fit Minded. Today, I'm proud to say that vision is working.

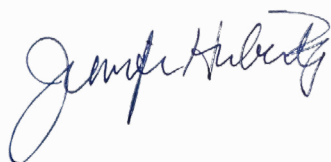
In just three years, we've helped companies across digital mental health, maternal wellness, healthcare, EAP providers, AI-driven coaching, and beyond generate nearly 40 peer-reviewed studies. We've helped build clinical models, shape product strategy, strengthen messaging, and move research out of the ivory tower and into the hands of founders, operators, and innovators who are building what's next.

This paper isn't just a celebration of what we've done, it's a reflection of what's possible. The insights shared here represent the kind of impact that happens when science is embedded, intentional, and aligned with what matters most: outcomes, clarity, trust, and growth.

Special thanks to Kelsey McAlister, our Research Scientist Manager, who led the research and writing of this paper. Her thoughtful analysis and clear articulation of our work reflect the caliber of science and scientists that define Fit Minded. And, thanks to the team at Fit Minded, for their continued dedication to the mission and vision of our company.

Most importantly, thank you to the teams who've partnered with us, challenged us, and trusted us to help bring their vision to life. We're just getting started.

With gratitude,



Dr. Jen Huberty
Founder & CEO, Fit Minded

Introduction

Health, wellness, and digital care innovation are exploding. Artificial intelligence (AI)-driven therapy tools, digital coaching platforms, maternal care apps, telehealth solutions, and spirituality-based programs are scaling faster than ever. Every week brings new products, new claims, and new promises to improve mental, emotional, and physical well-being. However, with this acceleration comes saturation and growing skepticism.

- Wellness and coaching are oversaturated.
- AI in health is booming but lacks evidence.
- Stakeholders are scrutinizing claims.
- Payers and investors are asking harder questions.

The result? A credibility gap.

In this environment, being new or exciting isn't enough. Innovation is everywhere, but evidence is not. Investors want proof of traction. Payers want cost-effectiveness. Users want results they can trust. The companies that will thrive are the ones that earn trust, scale responsibly, and back their value with evidence.

Enter Fit Minded: a strategic applied science firm built for fast-moving teams.

Three years ago, Dr. Jen Huberty, former Chief Science Officer at Calm, launched Fit Minded with a vision to help digital health companies turn science into business advantage. What began as a solo consultancy is now a strategic applied science firm partnering with mission-driven founders to build credibility, generate meaningful evidence, and create true market differentiation.

Since then, Fit Minded partnerships have spanned digital mental health, maternal and perinatal care, child and adolescent well-being, spiritual wellness, employee wellness, health behavior change and nutrition, and AI-driven coaching. Science is embedded into every corner of these businesses—strategy and planning, product development, clinical decisions, marketing, communications, data, and external partnerships. Sometimes that means designing a measurement plan or analyzing

Introduction

existing data. Other times it means refining a clinical model, preparing for a payer meeting, or translating outcomes into messaging that resonates.

Peer-reviewed research is one of the most visible outcomes of this work. While publishing isn't the goal for every project, it can be a powerful way to offer external validation, reinforce the science behind a product, and build lasting credibility. In the last three years, 37 peer-reviewed studies (14 of which are under review) have been produced in close partnership with clients across sectors, each grounded in real-world data, product use, and stakeholder-relevant questions.

These studies have helped clients sharpen product direction, strengthen investor readiness, inform strategic messaging, and contribute to successful acquisitions. They've accelerated growth by building trust with the stakeholders who matter most.

Innovation is everywhere,
yet only 3-4% of wellness
products deliver evidence
of impact.

Fit Minded's Approach

SCIENCE AS A STRATEGIC LEVER

Our work always starts by meeting companies where they are. Some need support aligning measurement to product goals. Others need help translating outcomes into payer briefs or investor decks. Some are designing clinical models; others are refining feature sets based on what drives change.

Fit Minded operates as a strategic science partner, bringing deep scientific expertise without the overhead of a full-time team. The approach is flexible, collaborative, and tailored to the realities of fast-paced growth. The goal is always the same: use science to create momentum, insight, and credibility.

Science is most valuable
when it's embedded.

Fit Minded's Approach

THIS WORK SPANS SEVEN KEY AREAS:

1 STRATEGY AND PLANNING

Framing the right questions, identifying priorities, aligning science with business goals

2 RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS

Designing and executing studies grounded in real-world use

3 PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATION

Build research partnerships, advisory boards, and grant strategies to expand capacity and credibility

4 MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

Translating outcomes into clear messaging that builds trust with users, payers, investors, and the broader market

5 PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

Guiding feature design, refinement, and roadmap decisions through evidence, not intuition

6 CLINICAL

Supporting the development of care models, programs, and interventions that hold up to real-world use and scrutiny

7 DATA

Making sense of product, engagement, and outcome data to uncover what's working and what to do next

Fit Minded's Impact:

Published Outcomes and Market Results

Publications are just one expression of a deeper capability: helping companies turn real-world data into insight, direction, and traction.

Over the past three years, we have supported clients at various stages of growth, spanning a wide range of populations, product types, and goals. Together, we've published 37 peer-reviewed studies (14 of which are under review), each rooted in product use, user outcomes, and questions that matter to stakeholders.

The results speak to the power of science when it's applied with purpose and precision.

IMPACT ACROSS STAGES AND SECTORS

Scientific rigor isn't reserved for large teams or late-stage companies. The right approach makes meaningful evidence possible at any stage. Fit Minded has published with clients from Seed stage to scale and across a variety of sectors. Whether the goal is early validation or scaled clinical outcomes, the science is tailored to meet the moment and move it forward.

FIT MINDED HAS PUBLISHED WITH CLIENTS ACROSS:



Fit Minded's Impact:

Published Outcomes and Market Results

FIT MINDED HAS PUBLISHED ACROSS A VARIETY OF SECTORS:



KNOWLEDGE & EDUCATION



MENTAL HEALTH



DIET & NUTRITION



PROFESSIONAL SPORTS



CORPORATE WELLNESS



SPIRITUALITY AND WELLNESS



FEM-TECH



TECH & INNOVATION



HEALTHCARE AND MEDICINE

Proving It Works:

What We've Helped Companies Demonstrate

As part of Fit Mind's science-led strategy, Fit Mind helps companies go beyond internal claims to show measurable, meaningful results backed by real-world data. These findings don't just confirm a product's value, they create lasting assets for fundraising, payer strategy, product direction, and market positioning.

FAST, MEASURABLE CLINICAL IMPACT

The science shows that meaningful mental health outcomes can be achieved quickly and sustained over time:

- Symptom reduction in as few as 3–6 sessions in digital mental health treatment for anxiety, depression, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder, sleep, and stress
- Clinically significant improvement for the majority of users participating in digital mental health treatment:
 - ◊ 73–96% of youth improved on key clinical measures
 - ◊ 92% of teens reduced stress
 - ◊ 77% of caregivers improved sleep
 - ◊ 84% of adults reduced their PTSD symptoms to minimal or none
- Lasting impact well beyond the point of care—users maintain improvements up to 3 months after treatment

Fit Mind helps companies go beyond internal claims to show measurable, meaningful results

Proving It Works:

What We've Helped Companies Demonstrate

BROAD REACH AND WHOLE-PERSON OUTCOMES

Fit Minded research helps companies demonstrate impact across populations and wellness dimensions:

- Inclusive reach: Results for youth, teens, caregivers, adults, and underserved groups
- Multi-dimensional outcomes including:
 - ◊ Mental health symptoms
 - ◊ Emotional regulation
 - ◊ Cognitive clarity and functioning
 - ◊ Mental fitness
 - ◊ Daily functioning
 - ◊ Spiritual well-being

REAL-WORLD ENGAGEMENT AND MARKET SIGNALS

Evidence doesn't just tell a clinical story, it supports business performance and stakeholder confidence:

- High retention: A parent-focused mental health platform retained users at 3x the industry average, even six months post-onboarding
- Low dose, high return:
 - ◊ 60%+ users of an AI mental wellness chatbot reported feeling better after a single session, and 80% said the tool fit easily into their daily routine after 1 week of use
 - ◊ In spirituality and wellness platforms, even modest engagement (an average of ~45 minutes over four weeks) was associated with improvements in mental health and well-being
- Continued interest: Users of digital mental health and wellness platforms reported strong perceived value and intent to continue using the product—even among those who didn't meet usage targets
- Operational efficiency: AI-powered safeguarding cut review time by over a third, saving 3,000+ clinical hours and helping practitioners respond faster

Understanding Why:

Insights That Drive Better Products

Peer-reviewed research doesn’t just confirm outcomes, it reveals what drives them.

The ability to uncover why change is happening gives companies a strategic edge. These insights guide product decisions, inform clinical models, and focus innovation where it matters most. When teams understand what’s working, for whom, and how, they can move faster with more focus and clarity.

The following examples illustrate how science has helped uncover meaningful drivers of change. For product and innovation teams, similar insights can inform everything from feature prioritization to content strategy to user segmentation.

INSIGHT	STRATEGIC IMPACT
Improvements among digital and brick-and-mortar mental health care were linked to emotion regulation, values alignment, cognitive clarity, and goal-setting	Informed coaching models and product features that reinforce the mechanisms driving measurable change
Spirituality and wellness platforms have shown strong engagement among Gen Z and demonstrated benefits for diverse adults, including Black users	Guided inclusive content design and culturally relevant UX strategies that improved user connection and fit
Decreased screen time coincided with improved mental health outcomes in youth participating in digital mental health treatment	Offered a real-world behavioral signal of progress—supporting broader storytelling around impact beyond the product
Young people participating in digital mental health treatment who made progress on goals set with a practitioner reported lower psychological distress	Reinforced the importance of personalized, goal-based care as a driver of outcomes; informing product features and coaching models

Demonstrating Demand and Staying Power

Outcomes matter, but so does engagement. When science reveals how people actually use and respond to a product in the real world, it becomes a powerful tool for telling a credible growth story.

Peer-reviewed publications have helped companies show that users not only benefit from their products, they value them, return to them, and build them into their lives. Data points like these are especially compelling to payers, investors, and internal decision-makers evaluating product-market fit.

INSIGHT	STRATEGIC IMPACT
A parent-focused mental health platform retained users at 3x the typical industry rate, even six months post-onboarding	Demonstrated long-term user value and satisfaction—key metrics for both payers and investors
Over 60% of users of an AI mental wellness chatbot felt better after just one session; 80% said the tool fit easily into their daily lives	Validated ease of use and immediate benefit, strengthening go-to-market messaging and positioning
Users of digital mental health and wellness platforms reported strong perceived value and intent to continue using the product; even those who didn't meet usage targets	Reinforced product relevance even at low exposure—useful for messaging, onboarding, and pricing strategies

Aligning Science and Strategy

Strong outcomes and high engagement are essential, but they’re even more powerful when tied directly to business goals. When research findings reflect what stakeholders care about most, they become tools for strategic alignment and market momentum.

Peer-reviewed publications have helped companies do more than validate their product, they’ve turned real-world data into business intelligence. These insights show up in investor decks, payer conversations, product roadmaps, and brand positioning, helping teams move faster with clarity and confidence.

INSIGHT	STRATEGIC IMPACT
Outcomes across several digital and in-person health and wellness services were measured using validated tools that reflect both user experience and stakeholder priorities	Ensured findings were meaningful to payers, investors, and internal teams—strengthening credibility and cross-functional alignment
Study results became foundational proof of performance—now appearing in investor decks, payer briefs, product roadmaps, and growth plans	Provided trusted, third-party validation that accelerated conversations with partners and funders
Publications identified the features, behaviors, and usage patterns that drive results	Informed what gets built next—supporting product prioritization and refinement
Peer-reviewed studies reinforced product value in a crowded market	Strengthened differentiation and made scientific credibility a core part of the brand narrative, supporting investment and even acquisition

Imagine What This Could Unlock for Your Business

Publishing research is one powerful outcome, but it's only one part of the value a science partner brings.

This work often begins with a need: more credibility, stronger messaging, better product-market fit, or clearer evidence to support a clinical model. What it becomes is something more embedded, collaborative, and strategic.

Fit Minded partners across functions, product, clinical, data, communications, and leadership, to uncover meaningful insights and help move the business forward. That might mean developing a measurement framework, surfacing early outcomes, building a research partnership, or translating findings into messaging that resonates with stakeholders.

The publishing track record reflects how this work is done: fast, flexible, rigorous, and aligned to real-world business needs. Whether preparing for a payer conversation, refining a product roadmap, or supporting an investor raise, companies use the research generated through these partnerships not just to prove value, but to shape what comes next.

Science is the engine.
Momentum is the outcome.

Closing Thoughts

This white paper marks more than just a milestone: it celebrates three years of helping companies close the gap between innovation and evidence. In that time, Fit Minded has supported mission-driven teams in publishing nearly 40 peer-reviewed studies, generating insights that shape strategy, strengthen credibility, and accelerate growth.

In a market where bold claims are easy to make but hard to prove, evidence is no longer optional, it's a competitive advantage. The companies that lead with science don't just validate what works; they earn trust, make smarter decisions, and create momentum that lasts.

The proof is in the outcomes. But the real power lies in what those outcomes make possible.

As Fit Minded enters its 4th year, the mission remains the same: help teams turn science into real-world advantage. If you're exploring how to bring more clarity, evidence, and direction to your product or growth strategy, we'd love to talk.

2025

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