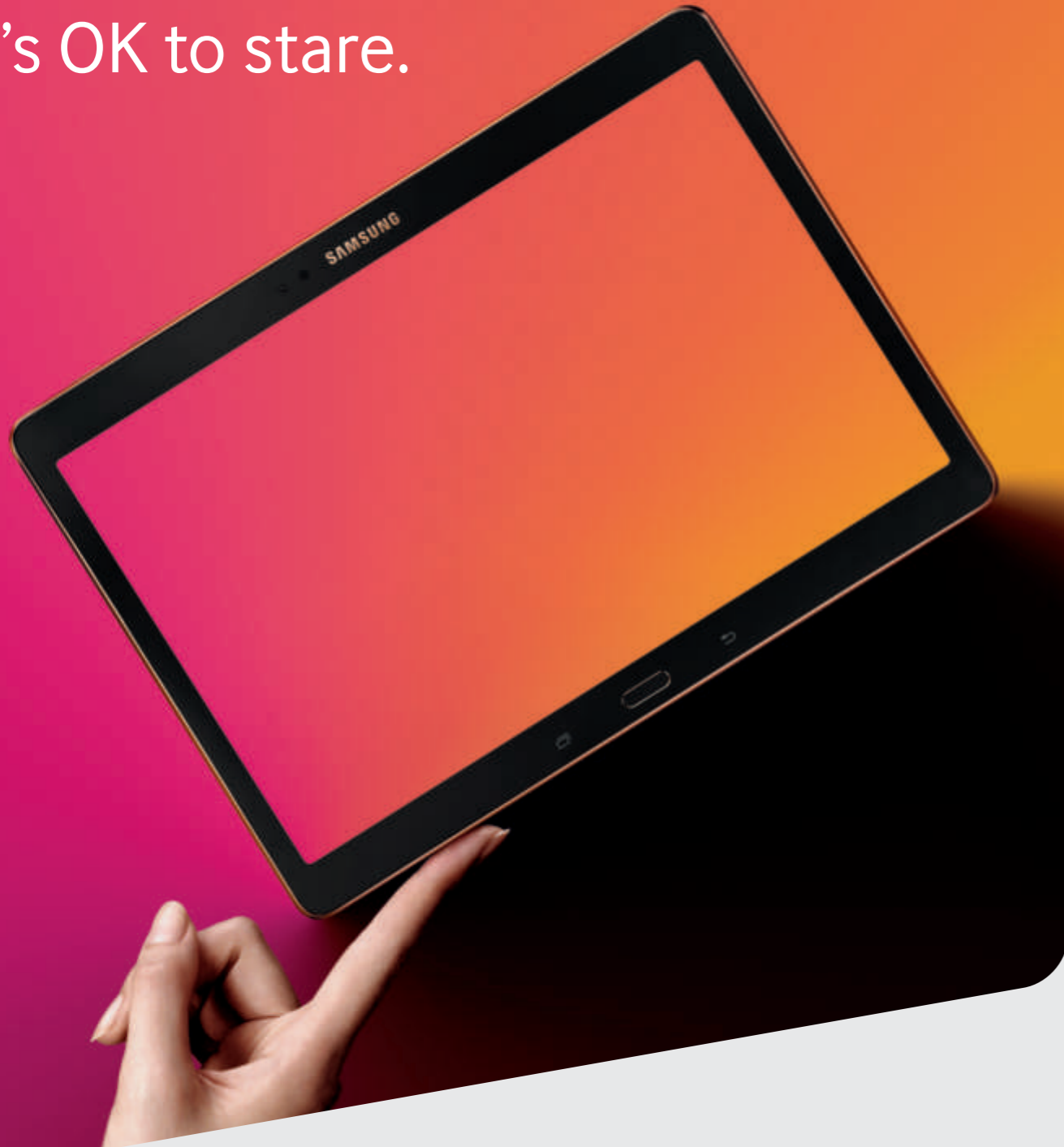


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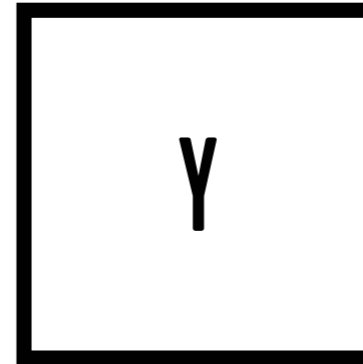
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# The geodoc will see you

How great an impact does where you live have on your physical well-being? Bill Davenhall believes it's a crucial factor, and wants your GP to take notice



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everywhere you've been - so why doesn't your doctor? "There is a lot of science tying your health to where you live and work," says medical behavioural scientist Bill Davenhall (right). His mission: to expand the emerging field of geomedicine by convincing health organisations such as the NHS to add your environmental data to your health records.

Davenhall, who heads up health and human services at California-based mapping firm Esri, argues that doctors should cross-reference their patients' location with environmental data such as pollution; geomedicine, he argues, could transform diagnosis and medical research. "Most people will not put a school in close proximity to a major highway, because of the quality of the air," he explains. "A lot of work has been done studying circulatory system disorders. But in other areas, like Parkinson's, it's not as clear."

Geotagging, he believes, would create a wellspring of data for medical researchers. "There was a very hazardous metal buried in the playground where I played as a kid. It was a toxic dump site for 50 years," he says. "They only found that out five years ago.

PHOTOGRAPHY: NICK WILSON



Bill Davenhall at the Grove Hotel, Hertfordshire (pollution level that June day: low, according to the UK Environment Agency)

So the people who have moved away, what did they die from? There's no ability to do those kind of studies without that data."

Davenhall has created *My Place History*, an iPhone app which lets individuals cross-reference their (currently US-only) addresses with databases of environmental hazards and show it to their GP. Users are then given a risk of major health problems, according to their exposure to variables such as heavy metals and airborne toxins. "Getting the geographic information is the easiest step," he says. "The key is how we train schools of medicine to change the way they look at diagnostics. The road to causality, in my opinion, begins with proximity." **OF** *esri.com*

**Tablet extra!** Download the WIRED app to see a map of pollution in the US