Message to Apple about 'exposure Covid-19 weekly update'

In the first two weeks of the beta launch of CoronaMelder (the Dutch app) we've received calls and other feedback from users who are confused by the weekly update from the GAEN framework. Users confuse the notification with the exposure notification sent by CoronaMelder and are wrongfully quarantaining themselves and getting anxious of this confusion. In this document we will explain the issue and ask for either a copy change or quitting sending these notifications altogether. This issue also got featured by RTL News (*Dutch*) explaining it more in depth

About the issue

CoronaMelder sends a notification (*melding*) when the user has been in contact with somebody who has a confirmed positive test of Covid-19. These notifications have a significant impact on the receiver. They have to stay home for ten days and according to the current test policy, they have to check for symptoms/ get tested for Covid-19. The anticipation of the so-called 'melding' is high and people can be anxious about it, as we have seen in the research we have conducted while making CoronaMelder.

CoronaMelder also sends other notifications, for example when the user has turned Bluetooth off or when CoronaMelder has not been able to connect to the internet to check for matching keys. We have done extensive usability testing to make sure that the users know the difference between these notifications and or not mistakenly worried about their health.

The GAEN framework also sends notifications to the user. For example the weekly update. We noticed a few issues with these. Most importantly: users confuse the system notification with the real notification they get when exposed to someone with Covid-19.

- The summaries are called 'Blootstelling Covid-19' (translated: 'Exposure to Covid-19'), which alarms the user in thinking that they have been exposed to someone with Covid-19.
- When the notification isn't expanded, it just says the title and 'melding' (notification). This is the exact wording that CoronaMelder uses to inform someone what happens if you receive a 'melding'.
- When clicking on one of these system notifications the user is redirected to settings → privacy → health → Exposure Covid-19. Here the user gets lost because he only sees the technical specifications about the exposure logging and not the information he needs when he really is exposed to someone with Covid-19. The user is alarmed and wants to know what the exposure notification means and what he has to do next. He opens CoronaMelder and reads nothing about the notification (because it wasn't sent by CoronaMelder) so he clicks on 'what to do when you receive a 'melding'.' He reads that he is exposed to someone with Covid-19 when in fact he might not be.

- This system notification (once clicked on or swiped away) can't be found again by the user so he is left with only his worries (and calls our help desk to ask what to do next).
- When calling our help desk they claim to have received a message of CoronaMelder. Because it uses the exact same language, it communicates about exposure and because they describe the same icon (which of course represents the coronavirus, a circle with small dots around it), it is very difficult to find out if the notification was indeed a real exposure notification and it is very hard to explain to users that they don't have to worry when receiving system notifications.

Our proposed solutions

We propose two solutions. The first is to make the default setting for these system notifications: off. The second is to make a few copy changes in the Dutch version.

Default system notifications: off

By making the default not sending these notifications users will not get worried about notifications they don't understand. If they don't receive them, they won't mistake them for a real exposure notification. CoronaMelder will take care of interacting with users and give them all the information and perspective as to what they have to do.

Users who want to turn on these system notifications can do that themselves. When turning them on they will anticipate them because they have knowingly chosen to do so.

Copy change in Dutch version

A few copy changes in the system notification will help users not mistake this notification for a real exposure notification from CoronaMelder.

1. Change the title in something explaining better that it's about a system notification. For example:
   - iOS contactmeldingen aan (iOS contact notifications on)
   - Covid-19 logboek (Covid-19 log book)
   - Wekelijkse update (Weekly update)
   - Covid-19 samenvatting (Covid-19 recap)

   Don't use words like 'exposure' or 'risk'. Users read these at a glance and immediately draw their conclusion. The exposure notification is a highly emotional message.

   We would gladly help out to user test these copy changes and how they go along with the Dutch public and users of CoronaMelder.

2. Add copy to the screen where the user is directed to when clicking on this system notification. Explain the system update and that it is NOT to be confused with a real exposure notification. Redirect them to CoronaMelder or the active app to see how a real exposure notification looks.