

Happier Tweets, Healthier Communities

February 05, 2015

Pacific Standard:

Why does one community have higher levels of heart disease than another? Some of the reasons are obvious, such as income and education levels or local eating and exercise norms.

But as epidemiologists have long argued, other likely factors are more ephemeral. Among them: how angry or content the residents tend to feel, and whether the environment fosters a sense of social connectedness.

Measuring such things is tough, but newly published research reports telling indicators can be found in bursts of 140 characters or less. Examining data on a county-by-county basis, it finds a strong connection between two seemingly disparate factors: deaths caused by the narrowing and hardening of coronary arteries and the language residents use on their Twitter accounts.

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“Given that the typical Twitter user is younger (median age 31) than the typical person at risk for atherosclerotic heart disease, it is not obvious why Twitter language should track heart disease mortality,” writes a research team led by Johannes Eichstaedt and Hansen Andrew Schwartz of the University of Pennsylvania. “The people tweeting are not the people dying. However, the tweets of younger adults may disclose characteristics of their community, reflecting a shared economic, physical, and psychological environment.”

Read the whole story: [*Pacific Standard*](#)