

Tweets can better predict heart disease rates than income, smoking and diabetes, study finds

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The Washington Post:

Is Twitter becoming a new public health database?

The latest evidence: A group of researchers has found that analyzing tweets can accurately predict the prevalence of heart disease.

In fact, the researchers say, Twitter can serve as a better predictor of coronary heart-disease rates than factors such as smoking, diabetes, income and education, obesity — combined. The findings from the University of Pennsylvania were published this week in the journal *Psychological Science*.

The research is part of a larger effort to incorporate big data into science, rather than relying on the time- and cost-intensive process of collecting representative samples and conducting surveys. A previous study found that Twitter can be an especially good way to track the flu, and other research has shown that examining people's Wikipedia reading habits can accurately forecast the spread of influenza and dengue.

Using Twitter as a tool to measure public health can help policymakers more quickly and effectively target campaigns and measure their results, said the study's lead author, Johannes Eichstaedt, a graduate student and founding research scientist of the university's World Well-Being Project.

Read the whole story: [The Washington Post](#)