

U.Va. Researchers Find Texts Can Be Early Warning For Suicide Prevention

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Researchers at the University of Virginia hope to use text messages to help clinicians detect an increased risk of suicide attempts in real-time.

With software that gauges a person's mood according to the frequency of positive or negative words sent in a text — like happy, joyful, hate or mad — lead author Jeff Glenn and others aim to use digital data to move suicide prevention beyond relying on patients to self-report suicidal thoughts that can sometimes be fleeting or concealed.

“When the clinician is doing a risk assessment, we're only getting a really narrow snapshot in time during that face-to-face encounter,” Glenn said [in a news release](#) Monday. “What we tried to do is design a study to learn if we could see signs of increased risk through text messaging, which is something that a lot of people do every day.”