Facebook app to predict mental health relapse

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Facebook app could help prevent mental health relapse

(Medical Xpress)—Researchers are looking at how social media can be used to prevent relapse in a person living with mental illness.

The world-first pilot study will use a Facebook app to look at changes in a person's social media interactions to predict when a person living with a mental illness is likely to experience a relapse.

Professor Paul Fitzgerald, Deputy Director of the Monash Alfred Psychiatry Centre (MAPrc), said social media had the potential to be a

life-saving way to prevent relapse for patients with [bipolar disorder](link), a substantial clinical problem.

"Bipolar disorder is unfortunately one of the largest risk factors for attempted suicide," Professor Fitzgerald said.

"Studies show that social media offers potential to monitor various psychiatric conditions, however, until now, there has been no application available to plug-in and draw on the information available."

Individuals download the application and they then link it with their Facebook profile.

"The app looks for changes in [social media](link) interactions, such as postings, likes and friend requests. It also prompts self-assessment by asking the profile owner to rate their mood each day," Professor Fitzgerald said.

"The app will be developed to the point where it can identify changes in Facebook use that predict impending illness relapse and then alert the patient, their mental health physician, carers or family to take immediate action."

Professor Fitzgerald said the research team would use the pilot study to develop and refine the algorithm that predicts a relapse.

MAPrc and RMIT University have developed the application with grant support from beyondblue.

Provided by Monash University