

Using Twitter may increase food-poisoning reporting

February 24 2017, by Neil Schoenherr



Credit: Maliz Ong

Nearly 1 in 4 U.S. citizens gets food poisoning every year, but very few report it. Twitter communications between the public and the proper government authorities could improve foodborne illness reporting as

well as the steps that follow, according to a new study from the Brown School at Washington University in St. Louis.

Jenine Harris, associate professor, and colleagues partnered with the City of St. Louis Department of Health in October 2015 to implement the HealthMap Foodborne Dashboard developed at Boston Children's Hospital. In the first seven months of the pilot study, they identified 193 tweets relevant to [food poisoning](#) and replied with a link to a form for reporting illness to the health department. Nearly 7 percent resulted in a [report](#) submission.

"Increasing trust and interaction between government and the [public](#) through social media are promising strategies for food safety," said Harris, lead author of the study, "Using Twitter to Identify and Respond to Food Poisoning: The Food Safety STL Project," published Feb. 3 in the *Journal of Public Health Management and Practice*.

"The dashboard technology has potential for improving foodborne illness reporting and can be implemented in other areas to improve response to public health issues such as suicidality, the spread of Zika virus, infection and hospital quality," Harris said.

Although about 23 percent of the U.S. population uses Twitter, extending the dashboard to other [social media](#) could also improve reporting among non-Twitter users, she said.

More information: Using Twitter to Identify and Respond to Food Poisoning: The Food Safety STL Project. *Journal of Public Health Management and Practice*. [DOI: 10.1097/PHH.0000000000000516](https://doi.org/10.1097/PHH.0000000000000516)

Provided by Washington University in St. Louis

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