

“What do I say? How do I say it?”

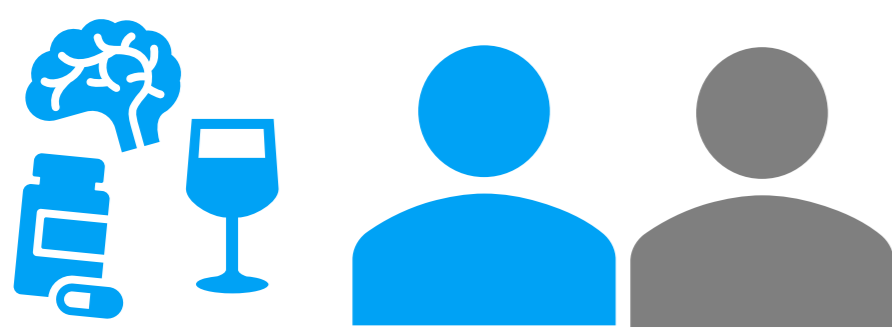
Twitter as a knowledge dissemination tool for Australian mental health research

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Why use Twitter for mental health research dissemination?

Mental and substance use disorders affect nearly 1 in 2 (46%) Australians during their lifetime¹. Despite this, research-to-practice gaps continue to slow the effective implementation of evidence-based practice and policy²⁻⁵.

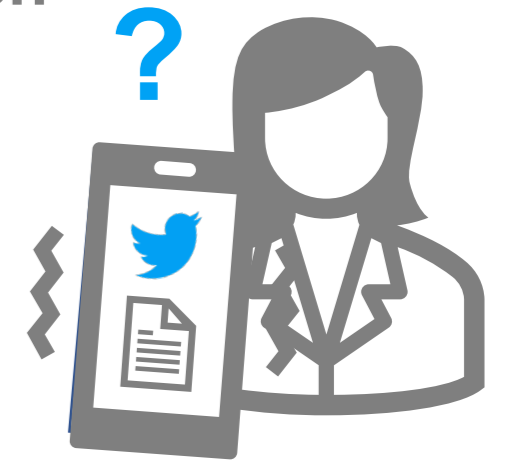


Social media, in particular microblogging site Twitter (www.twitter.com) is the leading alternative metric through which medical research is disseminated to the general public⁶. It is estimated that 1 in 5 Australians use Twitter, spending an average of 4 hours per week on the platform⁷.



Twitter has potential to be a powerful knowledge dissemination tool for health researchers and clinicians, however, despite multiple engagement metrics on the platform, there is a lack of guidance for how to use Twitter to effectively disseminate mental health research. This study aimed to address this by answering two questions:

1. How is the content of mental health research Tweets associated with user engagement? (**‘What do I say?’**)
2. How are the features of mental health research Tweets associated with user engagement? (**‘How do I say it?’**)



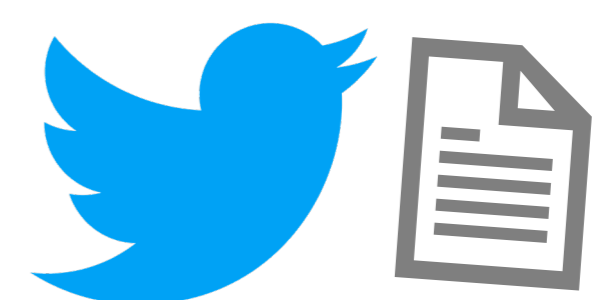
Method and results

- Three hundred mental health research Tweets were sampled from two large Australian mental health research organisations.
- Twenty-seven predictor variables were coded for each Tweet across five thematic categories. Variables were subject to reliability testing and regression analyses to determine associations with engagement outcomes of Favourites, Retweets, and Comments.
- Notably, conclusions could not reliably be drawn on whether a Tweet featured evidence-based information.
- Tweets were significantly more likely to be Retweeted if they contained multimedia. Tweets were significantly more likely to receive Comments if they focused on a specific population group. These associations remained significant when controlling for organisation.
- These findings indicate that researchers may be able to maximise engagement on Twitter by focusing on specific population groups and enriching Tweets with multimedia content, but care should be taken to ensure users can infer which messages are evidence-based.

THEMATIC CATEGORY	PREDICTOR VARIABLES	Retweets		Comments		Favourites	
		β	p	β	p	β	p
MESSAGING	Tweet contains announcement?	0.01	.944	0.55	.100	0.16	.160
	Tweet features participant recruitment for study?	0.24	.190	0.23	.687	-0.33	.080
	Tweet includes call to action	-0.16	.210	0.46	.236	-0.10	.400
MENTAL HEALTH AREA	Mental health area equals general or NOS	-0.13	.420	0.50	.326	0.09	.590
	Mental health area equals depression	-0.20	.350	0.13	.836	0.12	.550
	Mental health area equals bipolar, schizophrenia or psychosis	-0.46	.099	-0.69	.562	-0.43	.130
	Mental health area equals suicide	0.26	.150	0.92	.100	0.31	.100
	Tweet focuses on mental health of specific population group?*	0.12	.300	0.79*	.028*	-0.02	.870
EXTERNAL NETWORKS	Tweets mentions other accounts?	-0.08	.446	0.28	.401	0.10	.350
	Tweet uses hashtags?*	-0.23	.190	-0.96	.079	-0.47*	.011*
MEDIA FEATURES	Tweet includes media?*	0.28*	.047*	-0.14	.740	0.14	.310
	Tweet includes hyperlink?*	0.72*	<.001*	-0.26	.532	-0.08	.550

NOS = Not Otherwise Specified * $<.05$

Guidelines for mental health researchers using Twitter



Based on these results, we developed preliminary guidelines for mental health researchers using Twitter that focus on answering user’s questions of ‘what’ (is the information), ‘where’ (has it come from) and ‘who’ (is it for) through combinations of text, images and hyperlinks to the source for more information. To facilitate the uptake and implementation of these recommendations, we also created more extensive guidelines that feature examples of the guidelines in practice using ‘mock Tweets’. These guidelines are freely available via the Matilda Centre for Research in Mental Health and Substance Use website (bit.ly/twitter-guidelines-mh-research).

What do I say?	How do I say it?
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tell the audience what the information is, and where it came from (i.e., your key finding and the evidence-basis is clear) 2. Tell your audience who you’re speaking to (i.e., if your finding relates to a specific population group, make it clear) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Use media that adds to the Tweet, expanding on what the information is and where it came from (e.g. images, videos) 4. Use hyperlinks to verify research information in Tweet 5. Minimise over-use of hashtags (i.e. seek out hashtags that relate to specific events, communities or conversations)

References

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Access the full guidelines for Tweeting mental health research



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