

Social media useful tool in pandemic contact tracing

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It will soon be two years since the World Health Organisation declared that COVID-19 had reached pandemic status. In that time, millions have died from the disease and many more than that have been infected, some suffering from seemingly chronic illness after recovering from the initial symptoms. From the beginning, there was an obvious need to detect those who were infected with the causative pathogen, SARS-CoV-2. This was not only important for treating those people or ensuring that they self-isolated but also to alert anyone with whom the infected and putatively infectious person had come into contact.

Research in the *International Journal of Computer Applications in Technology*, has used a [statistical analysis](#) using artificial intelligence to show that social network communications might be a useful tool in [contact tracing](#) during a pandemic. An international team from India, Iraq, and Malaysia explains that contact tracing is used to alert people who have been in contact with a person who has reported testing positive for the disease.

"Creation of awareness and preventive measures against any infectious disease demands the need of certain methods like contact tracing approach," the team writes. The researchers have now used natural language processing (NLP) to analyze social media data. They have validated their analysis based on [online social networking](#) and conventional contact tracing tools. They point out that to be effective any test and trace service needs to be quick to note those who are reported as carrying the infection and then to be quick in contacting those people they may have encountered in the preceding days. As we know, many infectious disease, including COVID-19, can be infectious even when the carrier is asymptomatic or before symptoms appear.

The team suggests that contact tracing is key to bringing the present pandemic under control. Conventional contact tracing tools are vital, but the addition of approaches based on analyzing social media could allow more people who are potentially infectious to be caught in the net and advised to self-isolate before they pass on the virus to other people.

More information: Anasuya Swain et al, A statistical analysis for COVID-19 as a contract tracing approach and social network communication management, *International Journal of Computer Applications in Technology* (2022). [DOI: 10.1504/IJCAT.2021.120457](https://doi.org/10.1504/IJCAT.2021.120457)

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