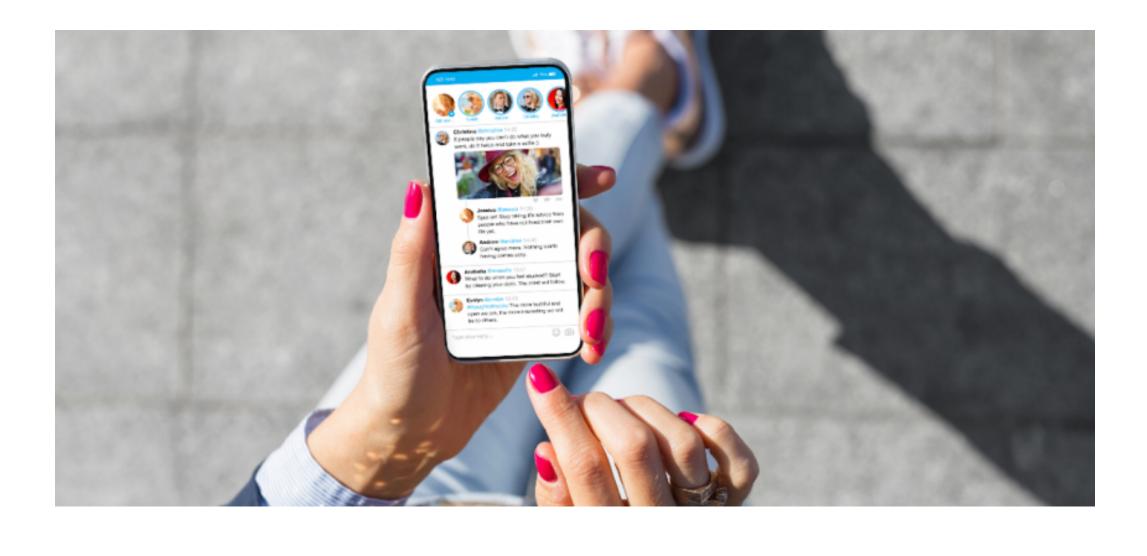
**Digital Health Science News** 

## JMIR Aging | Using Twitter to Examine Stigma Against People With Dementia During COVID-19

On July 29, 2022

Tagged ageism, attention, belief, bias, cognition, cognitive impairment, coronavirus 2019, COVID-19, dementia, impact, infodemiology, misinformation, risk, social media, stigma, Twitter **Edit This** 



JMIR Publications recently published "Using Twitter to Examine Stigma Against People With Dementia During COVID-19: Infodemiology Study" in JMIR Aging which reported that during the pandemic, there has been significant social media attention focused on the increased COVID-19 risks and impacts for people with dementia and their care partners.

This study used Twitter data to understand stigma against people with dementia propagated during the COVID-19 pandemic.

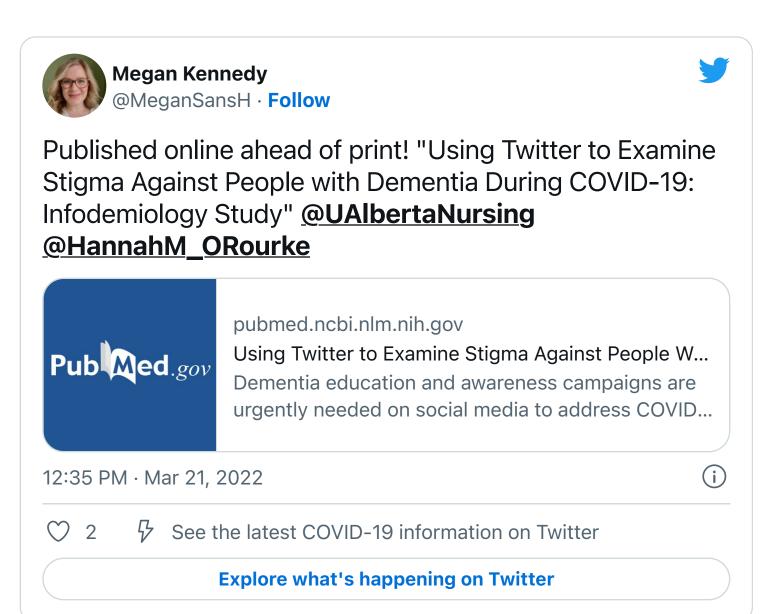
Based on the JMIR Aging authors' analysis, 4 main themes were identified:

- 1. Ageism and devaluing the lives of people with dementia
- 2. Misinformation and false beliefs about dementia and COVID-19
- 3. Dementia used as an insult for political ridicule, and
- 4. Challenging stigma against dementia

How people talk about dementia impacts how policy makers, clinicians, and the public value the lives of people with dementia.

Stigma perpetuates misinformation, pejorative language, and patronizing attitudes that can lead to discriminatory actions, such as the limited provision of lifesaving supports and health services for people with dementia during the pandemic.

Dr. Juanita-Dawne Bacsu from the University of Saskatchewan said, "The COVID-19 pandemic is taking a serious toll on people with dementia and their care partners."



Beyond dissemination of information by traditional news media outlets, Twitter and other forms of social media have been used extensively by individuals during the pandemic in a many-to-many communication structure to share messages about COVID-19.

Addressing stigma against dementia on social media is important because it can have severe implications, including depression, anxiety, fear, social isolation, feelings of shame, and a decreased quality of life for people with dementia and their care partners.

Examining how stigma manifested on social media during the pandemic may deepen our understanding of the

against dementia, especially in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Apart from the 1 study by Oscar et al, there is a paucity of research exploring social media discourse related to stigma

Using Twitter data, the objective of this study was to examine social media discourse on stigma against people with

methods and content used to facilitate stigma communication against people with dementia and their care partners.

dementia during the pandemic.

Dr. Bacsu and the research team concluded in their JMIR Publications Research Output that unfortunately, much of

this discourse has amplified issues of preexisting ageism and stigma against people with dementia.

This study identified 4 themes for dementia-related stigma and COVID-19, ranging from misinformation and false

beliefs to challenging stigma against dementia. How society talks about dementia impacts how policy makers, clinicians, and the public value the lives of people with

dementia.

Thus, COVID-19 policies and public health messages should focus on precautions and preventive measures instead of

Consequently, it is essential that people with dementia not be defined by their disease during the pandemic but be instead recognized as diverse individuals who are able to live meaningful lives with the same human rights as any other person.

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DOI - https://doi.org/10.2196/35677

labeling people with dementia.

Full-text - https://aging.jmir.org/2022/1/e35677 Free Altmetric Report - https://jmir.altmetric.com/details/125027815

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