**Potential Vocal Tracking App Could Detect Depression Changes**

*A deep-learning model of voice coordination features can be used to assist mental health classifications.*

\*\*\* EMBARGOED UNTIL JUNE 8, 2021 AT 4:00 P.M. \*\*\*

MELVILLE, N.Y., June 8, 2021 -- According to the World Health Organization, more than 264 million people worldwide have Major Depression Disorder and another 20 million have schizophrenia.

MDD and schizophrenia are among the most common precursors to suicide and, according to a 2018 CDC report, suicide is the second-leading cause of death in youth and young adults between 10 and 34 years of age, the second-leading cause of death of Black children between 10 and 14 years of age, and the third-leading cause of death for Black adolescents between 15 and 19 years of age.

During the 180th Meeting of the Acoustical Society of America, which will be held virtually June 8-10, Carol Espy-Wilson, from the University of Maryland, will discuss how a person's mental health status is reflected in the coordination of speech gestures. The keynote lecture, "Speech Acoustics and Mental Health Assessment," will take place Tuesday, June 8, at 4:00 p.m. Eastern U.S.

A speech inversion system maps acoustic signals to vocal track variables, showing the timing and spatial movement of speech gestures. Espy-Wilson said speech coordination changes when a person becomes depressed.

"Depression is accompanied by psychomotor slowing. As a result, they cannot think as fast, and their speaking rate is slowed with more and longer pauses than if they are not depressed," Espy-Wilson said. "This results in a simpler coordination of the articulators. What this means is that there is less coproduction of neighboring sounds and more of the sounds are fully articulated, that is, the articulators reach their targets."

The use of machine-learning techniques can help provide data for a deep-learning model for mental health classification. The goal of the research is to use technology, perhaps in the form of a smartphone application, to help patients and those around them stay informed about their mental health, something Espy-Wilson said would have a huge impact.

"Ideally, therapists will give the app to patients who suffer with MDD when they are in remission or only have mild depression," she said. "That is, they are in a state where they are likely to use it regularly, so their mental health status can be tracked, and the appropriate people will be alerted if the app detects that the severity of the depression is increasing.

"In that way, we hope there will be intervention before their depression increases to a level where they may consider suicide."

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**----------------------- MORE MEETING INFORMATION -----------------------**

**USEFUL LINKS**

Main meeting website: <https://acousticalsociety.org/asa-meetings/>

Technical program: <https://acousticalsociety.org/technical-program-and-special-sessions/>

Press Room: <http://acoustics.org/world-wide-press-room/>

**WORLDWIDE PRESS ROOM**

In the coming weeks, ASA's Worldwide Press Room will be updated with additional tips on dozens of newsworthy stories and lay language papers, which are summaries of presentations written by scientists for a general audience and accompanied by photos, audio and video. You can visit the site during the meeting at <http://acoustics.org/world-wide-press-room/>.

**PRESS REGISTRATION FOR MEETING SESSIONS**

We will grant free registration for credentialed and professional freelance journalists who wish to attend the meeting sessions. If you are a reporter and would like to attend, contact the AIP Media Line at media@aip.org. We can also help with setting up interviews and obtaining images, sound clips or background information.

**VIRTUAL MEDIA BRIEFINGS**

Press briefings will be held virtually during the conference. Credentialed media can register in advance by emailing media@aip.org and including your full name and affiliation in the message. The official schedule will be announced as soon as it is available, and registered attendees will be provided login information via email.

**ABOUT THE ACOUSTICAL SOCIETY OF AMERICA**

The Acoustical Society of America (ASA) is the premier international scientific society in acoustics devoted to the science and technology of sound. Its 7,000 members worldwide represent a broad spectrum of the study of acoustics. ASA publications include The Journal of the Acoustical Society of America (the world's leading journal on acoustics), Acoustics Today magazine, books, and standards on acoustics. The society also holds two major scientific meetings each year. For more information about ASA, visit our website at [http://www.acousticalsociety.org](http://www.acousticalsociety.org/).

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