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ABSTRACTS BOOK

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23. QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF PORTUGUESE PRESS COVERAGE REGARDING COSMETIC PRODUCTS: A PILOT TEST FOR A CASE STUDY

Marta Salvador Ferreira[1,2], Luís Filipe R. Azevedo[3,4], Vasco Moreira Ribeiro[5], Olga Estrela Magalhães[4], Isabel Martins de Almeida[1,2]

1- Associate Laboratory i4HB-Institute for Health and Bioeconomy, Faculty of Pharmacy, University of Porto, Porto, Portugal

2- UCIBIO—Applied Molecular Biosciences Unit, MedTech, Laboratory of Pharmaceutical Technology, Department of Drug Sciences, Faculty of Pharmacy, University of Porto, Porto, Portugal

3- Department of Community Medicine, Information and Health Decision Sciences (MEDCIDS), Faculty of Medicine, University of Porto, Porto, Portugal

4- Center for Health Technology and Services Research (CINTESIS), Faculty of Medicine, University of Porto, Porto, Portugal

5- Department of Communication and Information Sciences, Faculty of Arts and Humanities of University of Porto, Porto, Portugal

INTRODUCTION

Cosmetics are widely used products which contribute to consumers health and well-being. However, they are subject to many misconceptions which may affect their safe use, as well as consumers' informed choices. Among the available sources of information, newspapers are usually regarded as trustworthy, and they can influence consumers' knowledge, attitudes, and behavior.

AIM

To test and refine a grid of analysis for news pieces regarding cosmetic products in Portuguese press, including assessment criteria and data extracted from each article; and to obtain preliminary results for a 1-year case study.

METHODS

From November to December 2021, press titles were selected according to their themes and circulation data from 2020. News pieces authored by the editorial staff of selected titles relating to cosmetic products were included, whenever they intended to convey scientific information related to products or ingredients. Quantitative and qualitative data was extracted, namely news' identification, authors, sources, product recommendations, pictures, subjects, and information quality.

RESULTS

Three generalist newspapers were selected (one daily quality newspaper, one daily popular newspaper, and one weekly quality newspaper), as well as eight targeted magazines concerning beauty, fashion and lifestyle. From these titles, fourteen news pieces met the inclusion criteria, mainly from targeted titles (93%). All the news occupied at least one page, showing within the article a predominance of product recommendations (78%) and references to product benefits (93%), but much less frequently to product harms (29%). Half the news cited appropriate scientific sources, of those 57% are specialized (e.g. doctors, pharmacists), with a median of one source per news piece. Nearly all articles concerned skincare (93%), with 7% referring to haircare. As for information quality, 64% of the news were classified as "Confuse", and 36% as "Correct".

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

News pieces' selection was challenging due to the mixture of information regarding cosmetic products, lifestyle, and product recommendations. Overall, the tested grid of analysis proved to be adequate for this study. Most news pieces portrayed a positive view of cosmetic products, but risks related to ingredients and products' use were also discussed. Specialized news sources seem to be valued by journalists. However, most of the news contained conflicting information, which may misinform readers.