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Contact Dermatitis and TikTok: A Cross-sectional Analysis of Trending Content

To the Editor:

More than 1 billion users are active on TikTok, a social media platform where individuals can upload videos ranging from 2 seconds to 3 minutes.¹ Given the trend of patients soliciting skincare recommendations from social media, it is important to ensure that they are learning accurate information on contact dermatitis (CD), particularly on TikTok.² The purpose of this study was to determine the popularity and quality of trending CD videos on TikTok.

The authors searched TikTok on June 1, 2021, for trending videos tagged with “#contactdermatitis.” In total, 108 videos were screened to identify our target of 100 videos. Videos that were duplicates, non-English, or not relevant were excluded. Video characteristics were obtained. The DISCERN instrument—a validated 16-item questionnaire that appraises written consumer health information on items, such as treatment information sources, explanations, risks and benefits, and consequences of not using treatment—was used.³ The DISCERN scores, reported on a scale of 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent), were determined by 2 reviewers.³

The top 100 videos on CD had 451,306 likes, 10,718 comments, a mean length of 28.5 seconds, and a mean DISCERN score of 1.53 with a high interrater reliability (Cohen $\kappa > 0.7$). Seventy-six percent of the videos (76 of 100) were created by nonphysicians with a mean DISCERN score of 1.42, 18% (18 of 100) by physicians with a mean DISCERN score of 1.88, and 6% videos (6 of 100) by others (Table 1). Videos created by nonphysicians had an average of 3370 likes and 86 comments, whereas videos by physicians had an average of 11,386 likes and 241 comments, which may be attributable to their greater following (Table 1). Most dermatologist content creators were in private practice at 87.5% (14 of 16), and the other 12.5% (2 of 16) were dermatology residents. Irritant or allergic CD was not distinguished by most creators, and patch testing was mentioned in 2 videos. Common sources of CD were skincare products, cleaning supplies, and masks, which may be attributable to the COVID-19 pandemic. Interestingly, many patients posted on TikTok specifically to seek treatment recommendations from the online community.

Treatment recommendations varied among physicians and nonphysicians. Of the 17 videos that recommended skincare products (such as cleansers, azelaic acid, hyaluronic acid, and sunscreen), 65% (11 of 17) were from nonphysicians and 35% (6 of 17) were from physicians. Other recommendations included corticosteroids, allergy medications, antibiotics, and

TABLE 1. Overview of CD Popularity and Quality on TikTok

	No. Videos (%)	Average Likes	Average Comments	Average DISCERN Rating
Content creator				
Nonphysician	76 (76)	3370	86	1.42
Physician	18 (18)	11,386	241	1.88
Private company	3 (3)	15	0	1.82
Other health professionals	3 (3)	485	24	1.80
Sex				
Female	85 (85)	4058	97	1.50
Male	9 (9)	11,775	267	1.81
Other designations	6 (6)	66	12	1.54
Physician specialty				
Dermatology	16 (16)	7573	144	1.90
Plastic surgery	1 (1)	72,400	1785	1.60
Pediatrics	1 (1)	140	3	2.53
Video types				
Personal experience	65 (65)	6560	153	1.47
Educational CD content	28 (28)	728	21	1.59
Treatment advertising	5 (5)	87	8	1.67
Home remedies	2 (2)	2190	53	2.43

CD, contact dermatitis.

alternative treatments. Content creators, especially nonphysicians, had low DISCERN scores overall and can improve their content quality by citing references, discussing treatment risks and benefits, and emphasizing shared decision making with physicians, because these areas received particularly low DISCERN scores. Pertinent CD items, such as patch testing and irritant/allergen avoidance, should also be discussed.

Limitations include limited generalizability due to rapid turnover on TikTok, small sample size of physicians, and possibility of missed videos. In addition, although the DISCERN was initially validated for written materials, it has recently been used to analyze video materials as well.^{4,5} Nonetheless, the popularity of physician videos represents a high demand for reputable health information online and an opportunity to disseminate CD educational content on TikTok.

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