Docs on TikTok: The Benefits and Risks Physicians Experience on Social Media

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Introduction

There is a growing community of healthcare workers posting videos on TikTok, physicians included, thus serving as an avenue to enhance medical education, improve patient care, and expand career opportunities.

Previous studies have used researchers to analyze social media posts to define professional behavior and opportunities online; however, there is little data on the physician-user's perspective.[1,2]

Our objectives:

1. Gain insight into the experiences of physician "TikTok-ers."
2. Identify potential risks and benefits to healthcare they have recognized during their own social media engagement.

Methodology

We developed a questionnaire assessing career impact, risks, and benefits identified by DO and MD physicians with over ten thousand followers on TikTok.

The questionnaire was distributed to all physicians who met this criteria via their social media accounts and the data was analyzed, classifying themes connecting common experiences.

Results

- In total, **55 physicians** across **20 specialties** completed the questionnaire.
- Approximately 24% have been posting medical content on social media for less than one year, with over 75% for fewer than five years.
- All participants were asked to rate the average overall benefit and the average overall risk that the application had within the field of medicine. There was a statistically significant difference in which the **benefit of being on TikTok was on average greater than the risks** associated with participation (p=<0.001).
- Overall, **76% of physicians saw TikTok having positive impacts** to their practices.
- 22% reported no impact and 2% reported some negative impact.

Education
- Medical Education
- Patient Education
- TikTok Trends

Creativity
- Fighting Burnout
- Creative Outlet
- Reconnect with Medicine

Increased Access to Care
- Patient Empowerment
- Healthcare Disparities
- Minorities and Marginalized Groups

Professionalism
- Physician Integrity
- Employer Policy
- Generational Disapproval

Legal Repercussions
- HIPAA
- Patient Protection
- Patient Consent

Misinformation
- Misinterpretation
- Miscommunication
- Controversial Data

- These experienced physician content creators have offered advice to others interested in creating medical TikTok accounts including: originality and authenticity are key, use your voice to educate, keep it "professional," and if you are truly interested, get creative and take a leap of faith.

Conclusions

Physicians are making their presence known on social media, and TikTok provides no exception. This platform has created opportunities to beneficially engage with a broad online audience. According to surveyed physicians, the benefits provided a stronger positive impact to their careers when compared with risks.

Our study suggests that this social media platform is viewed as generally more beneficial than risky at least among very popular users. Tik Tok represents another way for continuing medical education, contact with patients, and discussion of topics relevant to doctors in their practice.

<u>Future Directions:</u>

1. More extensive quantitative analysis of these experiences.
2. Broaden the sample population to other healthcare professions.

<u>Limitations of this project:</u>

1. Applicability of this data to physician TikTok users only.
2. Physicians that have influence on the medical social media community may be more likely to respond in a positive manner due to their success on TikTok.

Literature cited

1. George DR, Rovniak LS, Kraschnewski JL. Dangers and opportunities for social media in medicine. *Clin Obstet Gynecol.* 2013;56(3):453-462.
2. Hazzam J, Lahrech A. Health Care Professionals' Social Media Behavior and the Underlying Factors of Social Media Adoption and Use: Quantitative Study. *J Med Internet Res.* 2018;20(11):e12035. Published 2018 Nov 7.

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No Conflicts of Interest to disclose.

Further information

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