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TikTok as a Source of Dermatologic Information on Atopic Dermatitis

To the Editor:

Atopic dermatitis (AD) is one of the most common pediatric dermatologic diseases. Given the complexity of AD pathogenesis and therapies, patient education is essential to improve treatment adherence and address any misconceptions.¹ Video-based interventions may be used adjunctively with treatment and have a grade B level of evidence per the 2014 AD guidelines.¹ Interestingly, social media—especially TikTok, a video-based platform—is a popular way pediatric patients seek medical information.² Nearly 65% of TikTok users in the United States are between the ages of 10 and 29 years, it is imperative to ensure that patients are learning accurate and useful AD content on TikTok.^{2,3} Therefore, the purpose of this study was to analyze TikTok's most popular content on AD.

A TikTok search on June 1, 2021, using terms “#atopicdermatitis” and “#eczema,” uncovered 136 videos, which were screened to identify our target of 100 videos. Duplicates, non-English, or unrelated AD videos were excluded. Video characteristics were recorded and content quality was determined by 2 independent reviewers using DISCERN, a tool which assesses the quality of consumer health information on a 1- (poor) through 5-point (excellent) scale using a 16-item questionnaire.⁴

Overall, the top videos on AD had an average of 557,793 views, a mean DISCERN score of 1.99, and high interrater

reliability (Cohen $\kappa > 0.75$; Table 1). The rising popularity of private companies relative to both physicians and nonphysicians highlights the impact of marketing in driving consumer engagement. The popularity of physician videos compared with nonphysician videos could indicate a desire for health information online. In addition, many TikTok videos discussed treatment strategies. The most recommended treatments were moisturizers ($n = 44$), topical corticosteroids ($n = 8$), topical calcineurin inhibitors ($n = 1$), bathing and bathing practices ($n = 4$), and phototherapy ($n = 3$). Interestingly, the top 3 recommended treatments were all considered grade A, followed by grade B (phototherapy) and grade C (bathing practices) recommendations per the 2014 AD guidelines.⁵

Limitations include a small sample size and the possibility of missing related videos that were not tagged with the searched hashtags. DISCERN was initially designed to assess content quality of written materials and has not been validated for video content. Furthermore, DISCERN does not assess material accuracy. Lastly, the results may not be generalizable to different periods given the turnover rate of content on TikTok. Despite these limitations, this study provides key insights into AD content that patients are learning on TikTok given that pediatric patients may use TikTok as a surrogate or supplement for medical advice.

Physicians have the unique opportunity to disseminate reliable health information to a captive audience. Content creators can provide higher quality informative videos by providing AD guideline information and incorporating strength of treatment recommendations. In addition, they should stress the complex-

TABLE 1. Overview of AD Content on TikTok

| | No. Videos (%) | Mean No. Views | Mean No. Likes | Mean No. Comments | Mean DISCERN Scores |
|-----------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| Content creator | | | | | |
| Nonphysician | 60 (60) | 614,289 | 66,519 | 574 | 1.99 |
| Physician | 33 (33) | 334,078 | 23,968 | 440 | 2.29 |
| Private company | 7 (7) | 1,128,200 | 174,100 | 1626 | 1.83 |
| Sex | | | | | |
| Female | 69 (69) | 616,594 | 54,093 | 550 | 1.97 |
| Male | 31 (31) | 406,883 | 94,038 | 948 | 2.18 |
| Physician specialty | | | | | |
| Dermatology | 30 (30) | 340,192 | 23,011 | 455 | 2.29 |
| Plastic surgery | 1 (1) | 267,900 | 36,900 | 156 | 3.19 |
| Video types | | | | | |
| Personal experience | 23 (23) | 415,827 | 49,432 | 439 | 1.60 |
| Educational content | 11 (11) | 249,895 | 16,629 | 344 | 2.18 |
| Home remedies | 16 (16) | 394,281 | 44,502 | 522 | 1.90 |
| Treatment advertising | 50 (50) | 724,390 | 77,090 | 747 | 2.16 |

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ity of AD, the risks and benefits of treatment, and the importance of consulting a dermatologist. Physicians should consider uploading strong educational content on AD on TikTok given

the prevalence of AD in pediatric patients and the high utilization of this platform.

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