

Quality Assessment of Blepharoplasty Information on TikTok: An Observational Qualitative Study

Mary Grace Hamlin¹, Bo DeVries¹, Pranav Gunturu¹, Pavan Suresh¹, Nick Kenner¹, Ariane Crabb¹, Tiffany Shahrooz, MD²

¹ University of Toledo, College of Medicine and Life Sciences, Toledo, Ohio, USA

² Advanced Vision Care, Los Angeles, CA, USA

Email: MaryGrace.Hamlin@rockets.utoledo.edu

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Abstract

Introduction: Following a decline in overall surgical volume in 2020 due to the pandemic, there was a +81.7% increase in traditional blepharoplasties in the year 2021. 68% of a study's respondents reported increased awareness of facial plastic surgery (FPS) procedures through social media, which was significantly correlated with the decision to pursue FPS ($P = 0.02$). TikTok (ByteDance) is a social media platform commonly used by healthcare professionals and patients to share individual experiences and medical advice, and this study evaluates the quality and reliability of TikTok videos discussing blepharoplasties.

Methods: This observational qualitative study analyzed the quality and reliability of TikTok videos discussing blepharoplasties. Videos were selected using six hashtags related to blepharoplasty: #blepharoplasty, #upperblepharoplasty, #lowerblepharoplasty, #eyelidsurgery, and videos tagged with the combination of #blepharoplasty and #surgeryrecovery. The top 20 videos with a minimum of 1,000 views were collected for each hashtag and reviewed by four independent reviewers using the DISCERN tool to assess video quality and reliability. Statistical analyses were performed in Excel using the Data Analysis ToolPak.

Results: Of the 100 TikTok videos that were screened, 99 met inclusion criteria. Healthcare professionals (HCP) created the majority of videos reviewed ($n = 51$, 51.5%). Plastic surgeons created the most content of all HCPs ($n = 31$, 60.8%), followed by unspecified physicians ($n = 10$, 19.6%) and ophthalmologists ($n = 6$, 11.8%). Videos created by HCPs had significantly higher reliability ($T = 5.37$, $P < 0.001$), quality ($T = 5.11$, $P < 0.001$), and overall DISCERN scores ($T = 8.40$, $P < 0.001$) compared to non-healthcare professionals.

Conclusions: TikTok videos about blepharoplasties have significantly greater reliability, quality, and overall DISCERN scores when they are created by HCPs as compared to non-healthcare professionals. This study underscores the need for active engagement by healthcare professionals on social media to combat misinformation.

Keywords: Blepharoplasty, TikTok, Misinformation

1. Introduction

Blepharoplasty is a surgical procedure involving the reduction of skin as well as removal of orbital fat in the eyelids and surrounding areas. Initially developed in 1818 for the repair of cancerous deformities of the eyelids, functional indications for blepharoplasty include dermatochalasis and/or ptosis that impact vision (1,2). However, the procedure has gained popularity for cosmetic indications in recent years, far outpacing those done for purely functional purposes. Among the most common elective cosmetic procedures performed today, many patients who elect for the procedure do so to counteract the effects of aging (3,4). Data from private-practice physicians in the United States, from 2000 – 2018, point to a 292% increase in both upper and lower blepharoplasty procedures (5). While postoperative satisfaction rates are generally high, the advent of social media has contributed to increasingly elevated patient expectations (2).

Expectations of results without adequate discussion of complications may be detrimental to satisfaction rates and patient safety. Although uncommon, blepharoplasty complications are always a possibility and must be discussed with each patient preoperatively. Plastic and oculoplastic surgeons must take great care to ensure correct postoperative eyelid position and closure to properly protect and lubricate the patient's eyes. Despite all appropriate care, however, complications may still arise such as dry eye disease, chemosis, blepharoptosis, hematoma, and in the worst case, retrobulbar hemorrhage that may lead to blindness (3,6,7). Because of these concerns, it is vital to ensure sufficient patient education prior to consultation and operation.

TikTok presents a unique challenge to healthcare professionals (HCPs) as they attempt to adequately educate their patients prior to surgery. Given its visually driven, short-form content, the platform has become a popular source of medical information for patients considering cosmetic procedures. A 2023 survey found that 65.5% of young women have intentionally used TikTok to obtain medical information, while 92.4% of this same demographic has unintentionally obtained medical information through TikTok (8). However, this new format presents considerable limitations. These include the spread of misinformation, the tendency for emotional anecdotes to supersede evidence-based guidance, undisclosed conflicts of interest, and difficulty verifying source credibility

(9). These concerns are particularly relevant to blepharoplasty, where unrealistic expectations may negatively impact patient satisfaction and surgical outcomes. To address these risks, it is critical that HCPs play an active role in disseminating accurate information on social media. In this study, we evaluate the quality of blepharoplasty-related content on TikTok through the dual lens of patient and HCP perspectives, with the goal of highlighting current gaps in information and identifying opportunities for improved patient education online.

2. Methods

This study analyzed the reliability and quality of TikTok videos discussing blepharoplasty following an observational qualitative study design. Researchers assessed videos tagged with one of six hashtags related to blepharoplasty: #blepharoplasty, #upperblepharoplasty, #lowerblepharoplasty, #eyelidsurgery, or tagged with a combination of #blepharoplasty and #surgeryrecovery. For each hashtag, researchers reviewed the top 20 videos with a minimum of 1,000 views. Data collection and analysis were conducted over two weeks between November 20, 2024, and December 2, 2024.

Inclusion Criteria

- **Language:** English
- **View Count:** All videos must have ≥1,000 views at the time of selection
- **Originality:** Selected videos must be posted by and owned by the owner of the account
- **Content:**
 - **HCPs:** Content focused on indications for blepharoplasty, the process of surgery, results, and potential complications. Content creators classified as HCPs included creators holding any of the following degrees: MD, DO, OD, PA, NP, RN, or DNP.
 - **Personal Anecdotes:** Content focused on personal stories of blepharoplasty with or without pictures or other supportive documentation. This category included clips from relevant podcasts or other TikTok videos that were “stitched” together. This category excludes education content created by HCPs.

Exclusion Criteria

- **Language:** Non-English
- **Duplicates:** Videos posted on multiple profiles or containing clips of a video that was previously included in the study
- **Content:** Videos about unrelated content or containing advertisements

Four unbiased individuals used the DISCERN tool to assess video quality and reliability. The DISCERN tool is a validated instrument for assessing consumer health information, and it was adapted in this study to be applied to video media. The DISCERN tool is made up of 16 questions and rates videos on their reliability, quality, and an overall rating. Each question response is on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from No (1) to Yes (5). The reliability score is determined by a series of eight questions, and the total reliability is measured out of 40. The quality score is similarly determined by a series of seven questions, and the total quality is divided by 35. The overall score is defined by the sum of the quality and reliability scores along with an overall ranking from the rater. The rating scale helps researchers translate qualitative assessments to a quantitative scale to assess whether the quality criteria have been fulfilled by the video. An overall DISCERN score of 64-80 is Excellent, 52-63 is Good, 41-51 is Fair, 30-40 is Poor, and 16-29 is Very Poor (10). All data used in this study were obtained from publicly available sources; as a result, the study was exempt from Institutional Review Board (IRB) review and approval.

Statistical Analysis

Researchers utilized a variety of statistical tests to assess the data collected with the DISCERN tool. They assessed the reliability of reviews between independent reviewers using the intraclass correlation coefficient (ICC). ICC values ≥ 0.75 indicate a high degree of agreement and, subsequently, consistent evaluations. To compare mean DISCERN scores between HCPs and users posting anecdotes, researchers used a two-sample equal variance T-Test. This analysis was repeated using the Mann-Whitney U Test to account for any abnormal data distribution. Statistical analyses were performed within Excel using the Data Analysis ToolPak.

3. Results

100 TikTok videos were screened with the blepharoplasty-related hashtags, and 99 of these videos met the inclusion criteria. The videos meeting the inclusion criteria were identified as either created by HCPs ($n = 51$, 51.5%) or personal anecdotes ($n = 48$, 48.5%). HCPs were stratified according to their profession, with the breakdown of professions shown in Figure 1. While the majority of videos were created by HCPs, ophthalmologists created only 12% of the videos by HCPs.

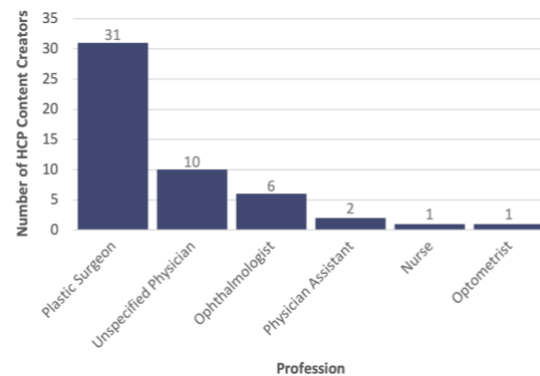


Figure 1. Professional Distinction of HCP Content Creators

To ensure consistency between disparate evaluators, the ICC was calculated for overall DISCERN scores, and this process was repeated for each of the five hashtag categories. Overall, reviewers agreed with moderate reliability. These values and their respective interpretations can be found in Table 1 (11).

Next, data collected from the DISCERN tool was analyzed across all five hashtags and hashtag

Table 1. Overall DISCERN Score ICC Calculations

Category	ICC	Interpretation
#eyelidsurgery	0.453	Poor reliability
#lowerblepharoplasty	0.630	Moderate reliability
#upperblepharoplasty	0.648	Moderate reliability
#blepharoplasty	0.920	Excellent reliability
#blephrecovery	0.514	Moderate reliability

Table 2. Average DISCERN Scores for HCPs' Videos versus Personal Anecdotes

Category	HCPs (Mean +/- SD)	Personal Anecdotes (Mean +/- SD)
Reliability Score	23.4 +/- 3.62	20.6 +/- 3.51
Quality Score	14.3 +/- 3.83	11.2 +/- 3.75
Overall Video Rating	44.7 +/- 7.54	34.9 +/- 6.74

combinations. The mean and standard deviation scores for reliability, quality, and overall video ranking across all hashtags are compiled in Table 2.

HCPs’ videos scored higher than personal anecdotes in each category of the DISCERN ranking. HCPs’ overall video score was rated as Fair, and personal anecdotes’ overall score was rated as Poor. An unpaired T-test was run to compare the DISCERN test scores for videos created by HCPs versus personal anecdotes for all hashtags, shown in Table 3.

The results revealed significantly greater reliability, quality, and overall ratings for videos created by HCPs as compared to personal anecdotes ($p < 0.001$ in every category). As demonstrated by the DISCERN score, these results

Table 3. Comparison of Reliability, Quality, and Overall Video Scores Across all Hashtags.

Category	N	Reliability Scores		Quality Scores		Overall Scores	
		T	P	T	P	T	P
Personal Anecdotes	48	-5.37	<0.001	-5.11	<0.001	-8.40	<0.001
Healthcare Professionals	51						

Table 4. Mann-Whitney U Test Results

Hashtag	Category	U	P	Interpretation
#eyelidsurgery	Reliability Score	31	<0.001	Significant difference between the two groups
	Quality Score	26	<0.001	
	Overall Score	15	<0.001	
#lowerblepharoplasty	Reliability Score	20.5	<0.001	Significant difference between the two groups
	Quality Score	24	<0.001	
	Overall Score	15	<0.001	
#upperblepharoplasty	Reliability Score	13.5	<0.001	Significant difference between the two groups
	Quality Score	14.5	<0.001	
	Overall Score	6	<0.001	
#blepharoplasty	Reliability Score	4.5	<0.001	Significant difference between the two groups
	Quality Score	12	<0.001	
	Overall Score	3.5	<0.001	
#blephrecovery	Reliability Score	33.5	<0.001	Significant difference between the two groups
	Quality Score	22	<0.001	
	Overall Score	18	<0.001	

Table 5. Comparison of DISCERN Scores with Engagement Metrics

Category	N	Overall DISCERN		Likes		Views	
		T	P	T	P	T	P
Personal Anecdotes	48	-8.40	<0.001	0.376	0.71	0.269	0.79
Healthcare Professionals	51						

indicate that the information presented in videos created by HCPs is more reliable and comprehensive compared to the information presented in personal anecdotes. This statistical analysis was run for average data in each hashtag, and the analysis assumed normally distributed data points. To further prove statistical significance, researchers ran Mann-Whitney U tests to compare the data for each category and each hashtag, as shown in Table 4.

For each hashtag, there was statistical significance between groups ($p < 0.001$). This confirms the previous claim that HCP-created videos scored more highly in every category across all hashtags, even in a non-parametric analysis. However, despite HCP-created videos consistently scoring higher in reliability and quality, we found no significant difference in engagement between videos created by one group over the other, as shown in Table 5. These results indicate that the higher reliability and quality of HCP-created videos do not significantly improve their performance or reach compared to anecdotal videos.

4. Discussion

Our analysis revealed that content created by HCPs had higher reliability, quality, and overall DISCERN scores compared to videos of personal anecdotes; however, our analysis was unable to identify which content is preferentially accessed by users. Despite this, another study showed participants not only obtained more health information from HCPs but also expressed a clear preference for obtaining health information from HCPs (8). This information may illustrate the public's awareness of the presence of misinformation online and their efforts to obtain health information from a trusted medical professional (8). Together, these findings emphasize the increased need for easily accessible medical information on social media platforms provided by HCPs.

Further, it is imperative for patients to access balanced information, as omission of associated

complications of a procedure can alter patients' perceptions and lead to unrealistic expectations. Inadequate or unbalanced preoperative information, such as that derived from personal anecdotal content, may heighten patient expectations and, in turn, lead to reduced postoperative satisfaction. One study found that patients with overly optimistic expectations were more likely to be dissatisfied with their results postoperatively (12). Thus, preoperative education plays a crucial role in shaping expectations and supports informed medical decision-making. Recognizing the influence of digital information patients obtain from outside the clinical setting can help guide HCPs in addressing specific concerns or goals during preoperative visits, ultimately optimizing clinical outcomes and postoperative satisfaction.

The difference in reliability and quality between HCP content and anecdotal content should not undermine the value of personal accounts, as they may still provide benefit to patients either considering a procedure or recovering from one. The sharing of patient experience is valuable, as it creates a sense of solidarity and can help validate personal concerns (13). Such perspectives may be particularly helpful for those seeking empathy, connection, or a sense of community regarding their procedure and recovery. As such, we do not discourage personal commentary but rather suggest that these two sources of content serve categorically different roles in patient education and support.

Limitations of this study include the analysis of a limited number of hashtags. Videos not featuring these specific hashtags were not considered, and, as such, could not be evaluated. While our use of popular hashtags provided widely distributed content specific to blepharoplasty, inclusion of a broader range of hashtags may provide a more representative comparison between HCP content and anecdotal content. Furthermore, our study focused on videos uploaded to a singular platform, TikTok. Future analysis of the quality and reliability of

blepharoplasty content on other short-form platforms, such as Instagram, as well as longer-form platforms like YouTube, should be considered to determine if similar findings persist across the broader social media landscape.

Finally, while anecdotal content can provide emotional support and foster a sense of shared experience, HCP produced educational material is better suited to inform patient expectations and decision-making. As social media continues to shape perceptions surrounding surgical interventions such as blepharoplasty, it is increasingly important for healthcare professionals to actively contribute accurate, balanced content that addresses both benefits and potential risks. Integrating clinically sound information with an appreciation for the impact of patient narratives may offer a more comprehensive and patient-centered approach to education in the digital era.

5. Conclusion

The broad reach and influence of TikTok raises concern for the accuracy of information presented on the app for users. The findings of this study highlight the variability in the reliability of information found in TikTok videos, leaving users with the challenge of discerning credible information. Researchers found that HCPs who created videos about blepharoplasties were more reliable and higher quality than personal anecdotes regarding the procedure. Given that many people continue to use TikTok as a source of news and information, HCPs should begin or continue to share credible health education on the platform in hopes of improving patient health literacy and overall outcomes (14).

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