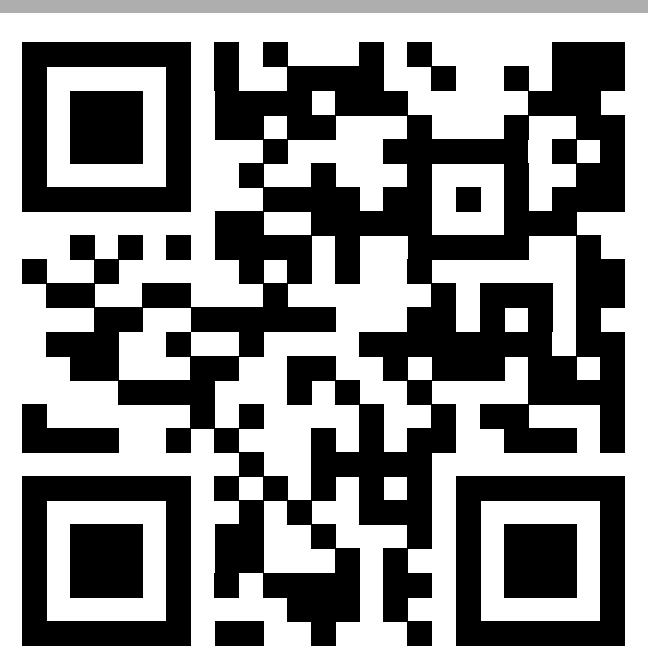


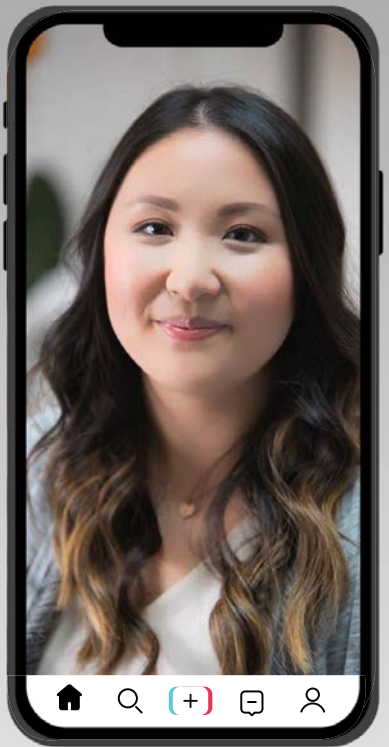
SOCIAL MEDICAL:

a preliminary analysis of medical content on TikTok

Scan the QR code for a video summary from the authors and a PDF file of the poster



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Why would I want to use TikTok?

Is finding information as easy as swiping up? TikTok has evolved from its original pop culture niche into a new era of social media, enabling content creators to communicate and entertain via short-form video. We preliminarily characterized medical content on TikTok to open the conversation on how medical communications professionals (MCPs) could broaden their use of social media.

What we did

We searched TikTok, identifying the first* 10 hits for selected terms. An assessor assigned each video to 1 of 10 categories (subjective best fit; categorization to multiple categories was not permitted). There was no vetting of content accuracy.

*TikTok uses a proprietary algorithm that considers views, likes and shares in ranking results.

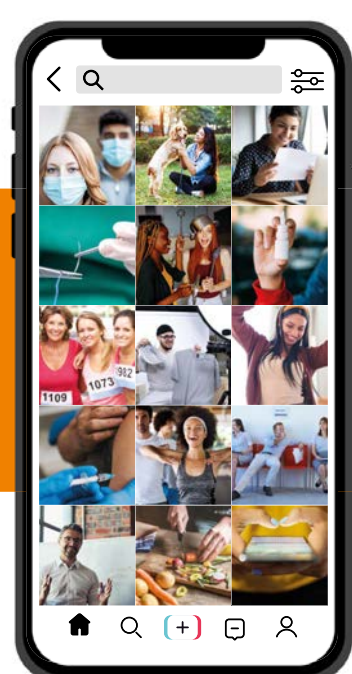
Search terms

med comms medical publications
pharmaceutical industry patient
regulatory affairs medical affairs oncology
medical journals science symposium
The Lancet American Society of Clinical Oncology
medical writer British Medical Journal cancer
New England Journal of Medicine neurology
medical education clinical trial

What we found

Sample

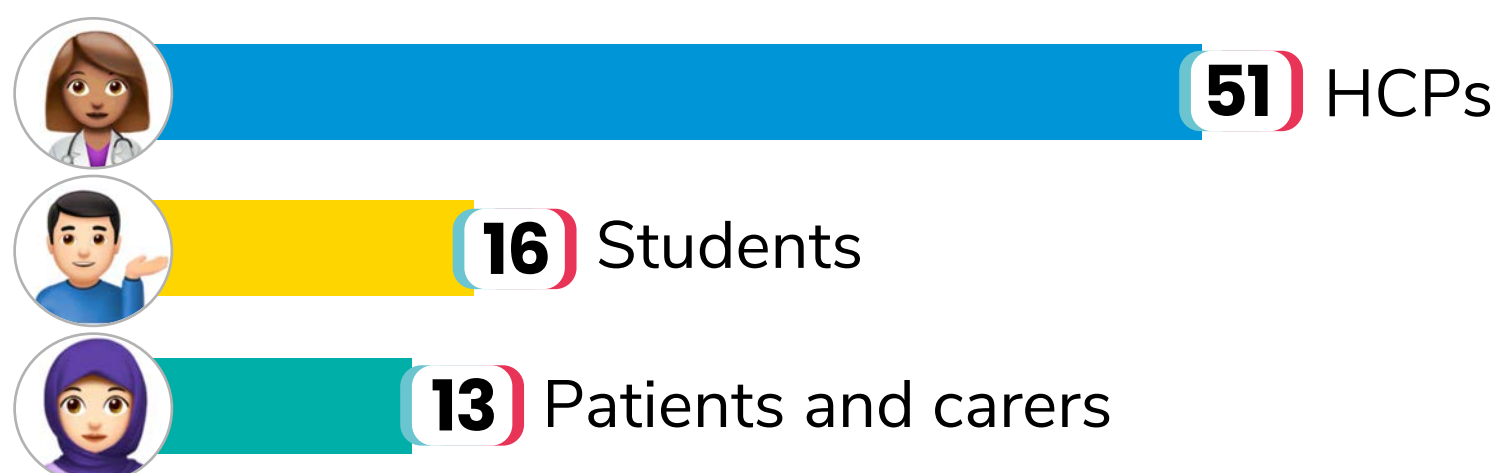
172 videos



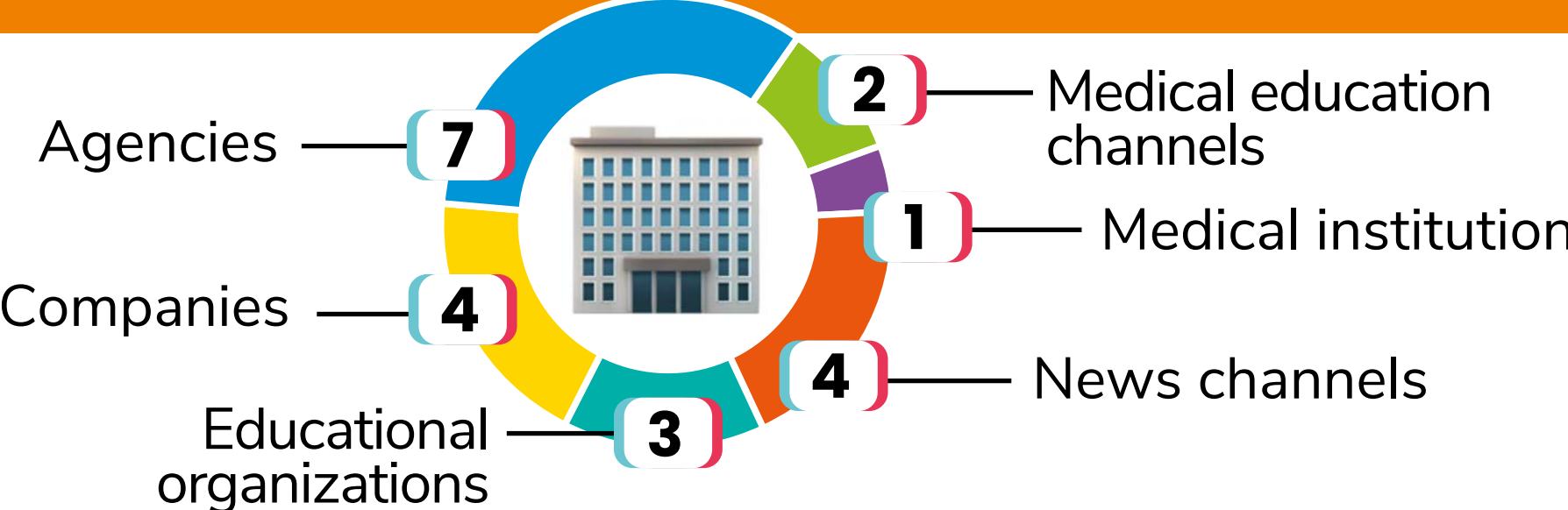
8 excluded
(duplicates/non-English/
unavailable)

Content creators

151 videos by individuals,
including

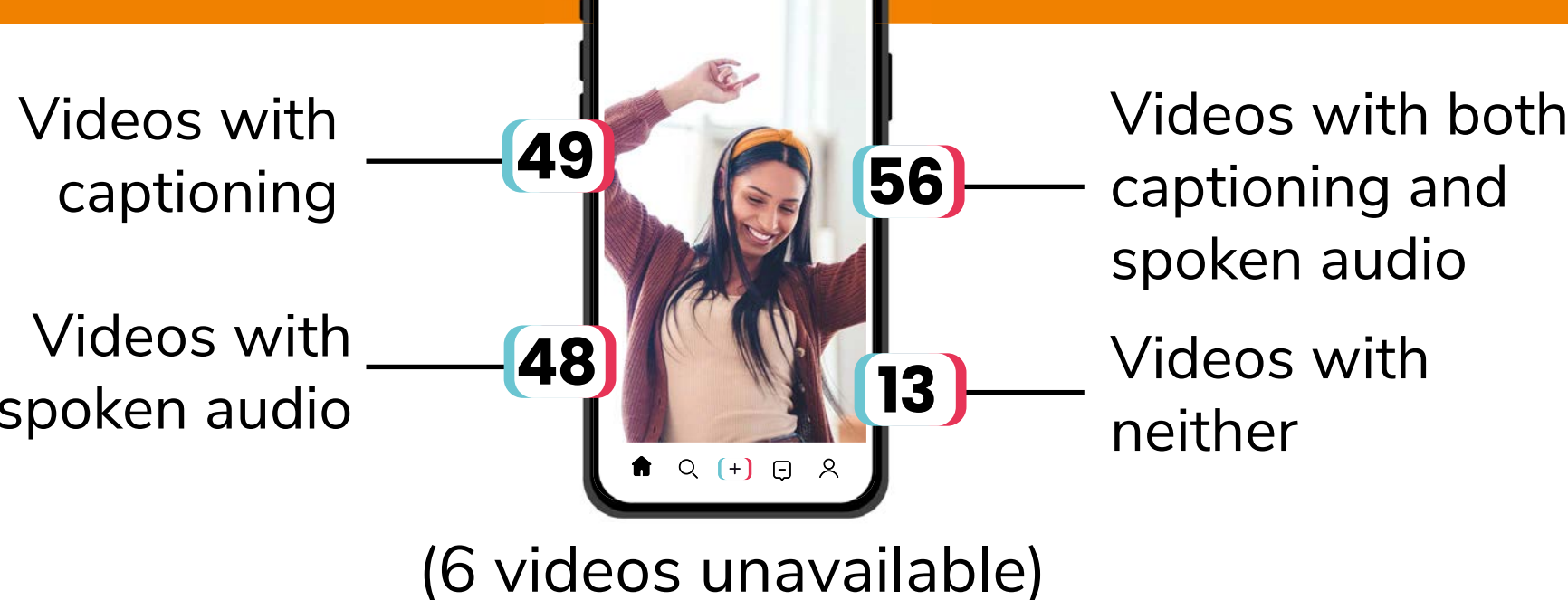


21 videos by organizations



Video features

60.1s mean length (range 28.5–109.3s)



What were the videos about?



Can MCPs really use TikTok to discover medical content?

Our preliminary characterization uncovered a breadth of medical content on TikTok, with insights into experiences of disease and treatment and careers likely to interest MCPs. Several videos appeared to aim to entertain, shock, titillate, or smear. No videos in our sample were created by pharma companies.

What's next?

Concerns raised by governments worldwide regarding TikTok's data privacy and security will likely impact its use by companies and organizations.

Perhaps we shouldn't be too hasty to dismiss TikTok – adding **entertainment to education may benefit retention and action**¹ when users are in a different headspace to 'work mode'.

Some HCPs acknowledge **a responsibility to engage on a platform that reaches new and wider audiences** – e.g. people who may not access regular news outlets.



"The time for any physician to discount social media is over ... it's making a huge difference"²

Don Dizon (Professor of Medicine at Brown University)



"If we're not on these platforms as HCPs, the conversation is dominated by people who don't have appropriate training"²

Austin Chiang (Director of Bariatric Endoscopy at Jefferson Health/Founder and President of the Association for Healthcare Social Media)

So, is now the right time for healthcare brands to bet on TikTok?



"KOLs are rising as subject matter across TikTok, taking advantage of content trends to deliver helpful information to their audiences"³



"There is a massive opportunity to activate disease state awareness campaigns, which are permissible by TikTok – whereas branded advertising is still limited"³

Alec Piliakas (Media Consultant)

Limitations

Relatively small sample size

Sample definition by keywords (whereas real TikTok algorithm would progressively improve relevance of recommended content based on previous searches and views)

Single assessor categorization

Some videos became unavailable during our analysis, leading to some incomplete datasets

References

1. 27 TikTok stats marketers need to know in 2023. <https://sproutsocial.com/insights/tiktok-stats/>.
2. TikTok docs use app to provide reliable medical information. <https://www.healio.com/news/primary-care/20210129/tiktok-docs-use-app-to-provide-reliable-medical-information>.
3. Why health care brands should bet on TikTok. <https://www.prdaily.com/health-care-on-tiktok/>.

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