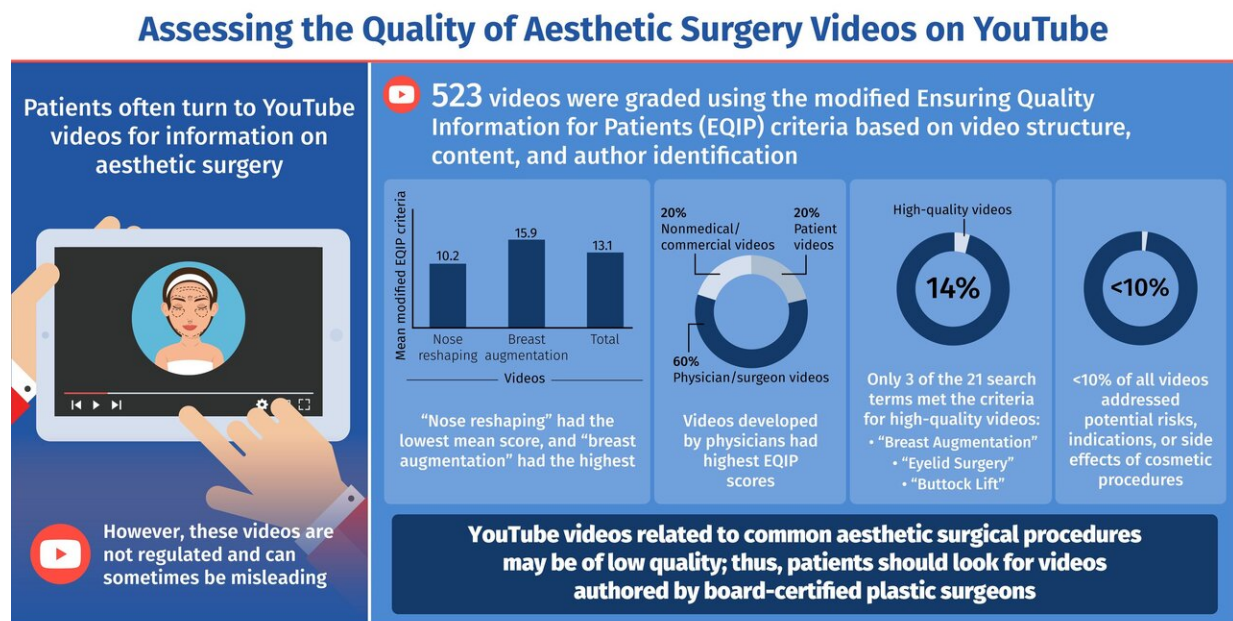


# New study examines the accuracy of plastic surgery videos on social media

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Can You Trust What You Watch? An Assessment of the Quality of Information in Aesthetic Surgery Videos on YouTube  
 Gray et al (2019) | DOI: 10.1097/01.GOX.0000526225.71582.e3

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In the era of 'Dr. Google,' social media is a tremendous influence on patients interested in cosmetic surgery, and with more than two billion users -- representing almost one-third of the internet -- YouTube has emerged as an essential platform for reaching people interested in plastic surgery. Credit: Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery

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users—representing almost one-third of the internet—YouTube has emerged as an essential platform for reaching people interested in plastic surgery.

However, due to a variety of factors, such as confusing terminology, [inaccurate information](#) and unreliable sources, YouTube and social media videos in general aren't necessarily the most reliable source of information, concludes a study in the February issue of *Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery*, the official medical journal of the American Society of Plastic Surgeons (ASPS).

The findings come at a time of increasing awareness of the importance of social media in [plastic surgery](#). In a recent ASPS survey, members rated [social media](#) as the single greatest impact on people's desire to get or consider getting plastic [surgery](#).

"Anyone can post videos on YouTube, with no regulation or oversight, potentially leading to misinformation," said ASPS member Ash Patel, MBChB, of Albany (N.Y.) Medical Center, senior author of a new study on the accuracy of public-facing plastic surgery videos.

"Patients should be aware that the information contained in aesthetic surgery videos could be of low-quality and has the potential to be inaccurate," Dr. Patel continued. "This study is really about informing the public and encouraging plastic surgeons to play an active role in developing and sharing accurate and more complete videos on cosmetic procedures."

Dr. Patel and colleagues searched YouTube to identify the top results for common aesthetic and plastic surgery procedures. The search included not only the medical terms for the procedures (such as 'abdominoplasty') but also commonly used lay terms (such as 'tummy tuck') and discovered less than ten percent of videos addressed the potential risks, indications,

or side effects of cosmetic procedures.

The quality of the information provided by each video was assessed using a modified version of the validated Ensuring Quality Information for Patients (EQIP) tool. The EQIP is used by physicians to determine if medical information is understandable, non-biased and properly describes the risks, benefits and alternatives of medical treatment. Of the total 523 videos rated, about 60 percent were developed by physicians or surgeons, 20 percent by patients, and 20 percent by other sources defined as non-medical personnel and commercial entities promoting services. Physician-produced videos had the highest average number of views compared to the other categories.

Most of the video content was low-quality, with an average EQIP score of about 13, out of a possible 26 points. "Overall, only three out of 21 search terms met criteria for high-quality videos," according to Dr. Patel. "Only the terms '[breast augmentation](#),' 'eyelid surgery' and 'buttock lift' received high-quality scores—mainly due to the volume of relevant videos produced by so many different [plastic surgeons](#). 'Breast augmentation' had the highest average score (about 16), while 'nose reshaping' had the lowest score (about 10).

Quality was higher for videos developed by physicians or surgeons: average EQIP score of about 14, compared to 12 for videos developed by patients and 10 for videos from other sources. But even for physician-produced videos, only about half of videos were considered high-quality.

"It involves a little research from the viewer, but they should check if the video is produced by a board-certified [plastic surgeon](#)" said Dr. Patel. "A good [video](#) will be easy to understand and provide information that includes who are good surgical candidates, as well as the risks, benefits and alternatives of the procedure."

Provided by Wolters Kluwer Health

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