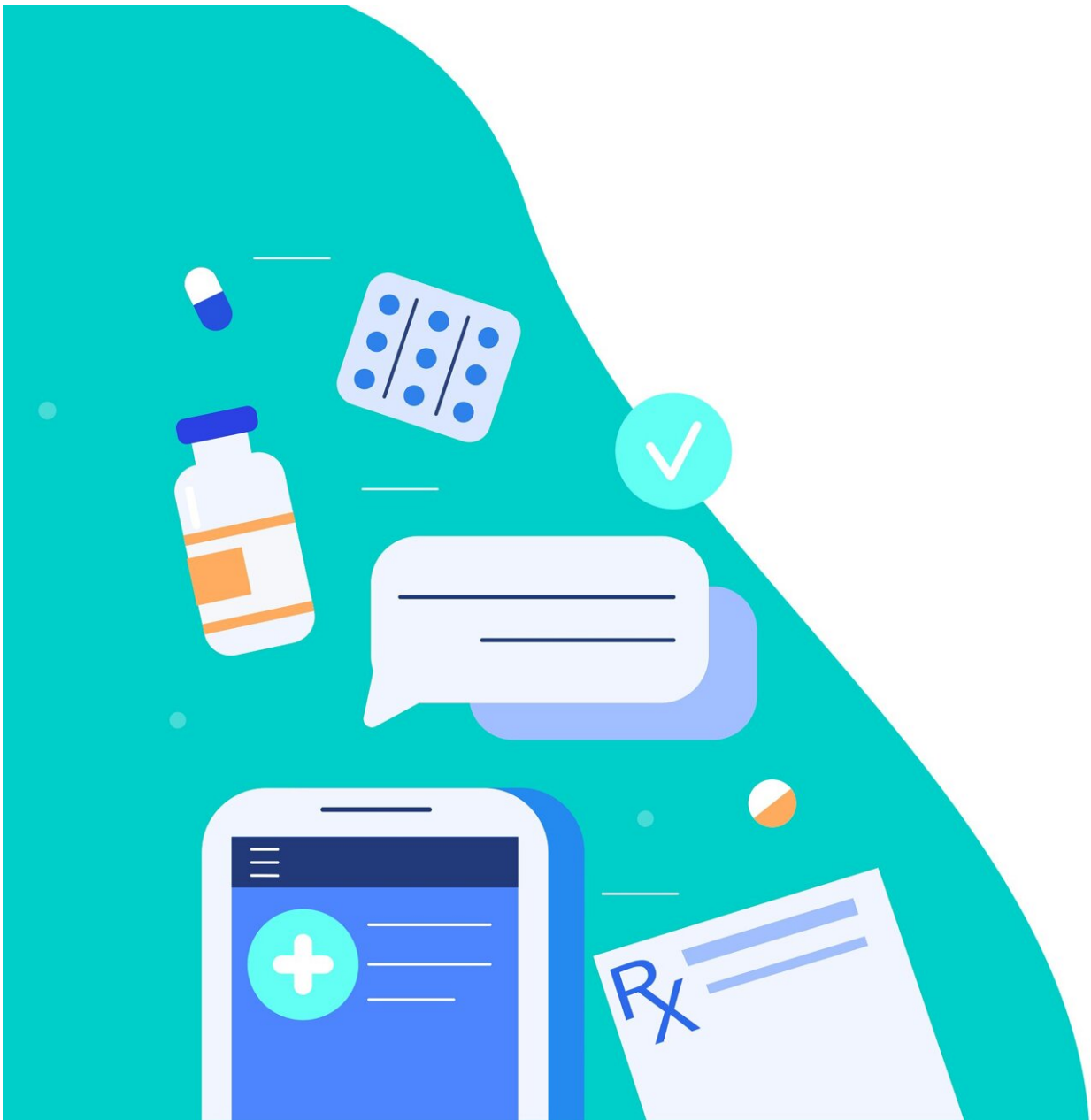


Visual abstracts in journal articles found to increase social media engagement, readership

October 18 2023, by Melissa Rohman



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Social media posts with visual abstracts—images with text and icons that convey a study's methods and findings—of clinical trials published online in peer-reviewed academic journals increased social media engagement compared to social media posts with article figures, according to a recent research letter [published](#) in *JAMA*.

Led by Seth Trueger, MD, MPH, associate professor of Emergency Medicine, the analysis included 205 randomized [clinical trials](#) with VAs published across 12 of JAMA Network's peer-reviewed [academic journals](#) from September 2021 through May 2022.

For each clinical trial included, the investigators created [social media posts](#) comprising a text summary of the study findings, an article link, and one of three images: a linking visual abstract (clicking the image opens the article in a [web browser](#)), an expandable visual abstract (clicking the image expands the image to full screen), or an article figure or table.

The three posts were then published once to each of the journal's accounts on X (formerly known as Twitter) and Facebook, one minute apart in a random sequence one hour after the clinical trial was published online.

Engagement was measured for seven days after study publication and included the number of link clicks, platform-reported impressions (how many people saw each post on their timeline) and "all other engagement."

For X/Twitter, engagement included the sum of replies, retweets, detail expansions, likes, profile clicks, hashtag clicks, and follows. For Facebook, engagement included the sum of comments, shares, reactions, and clicks on "see more," profile pages, or profile photos.

The authors found that link clicks were significantly higher in clinical trials with linked visual abstracts than with expandable visual abstracts or article figures (18 link clicks compared to 11 and nine link clicks, respectively).

Subgroup analyses also showed that link clicks were higher with linked visual abstracts on X/Twitter but not on Facebook. Increases in link clicks also differed by social media platform and journal category. For example, the authors saw increases in impressions and [engagement](#) for expandable visual abstracts on Facebook but not on X/Twitter, and the *JAMA* had the most significant increase in link clicks with linked visual abstracts compared to *JAMA Network's* other specialty journals.

"I think the biggest question journals should ask about visual abstracts is: what are we trying to do and how much do we need to invest to do it? Are we trying to get people to click on the link and go to the journal webpage, so they read some or all of the full article, and usually click on another article while they're there? Or do we want people to see the visual abstract, get the gist of the article, and maybe learn something?" Trueger said.

More information: N. Seth Trueger et al, Randomized Clinical Trial Visual Abstract Display and Social Media–Driven Website Traffic, *JAMA* (2023). [DOI: 10.1001/jama.2023.16839](https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.2023.16839)

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