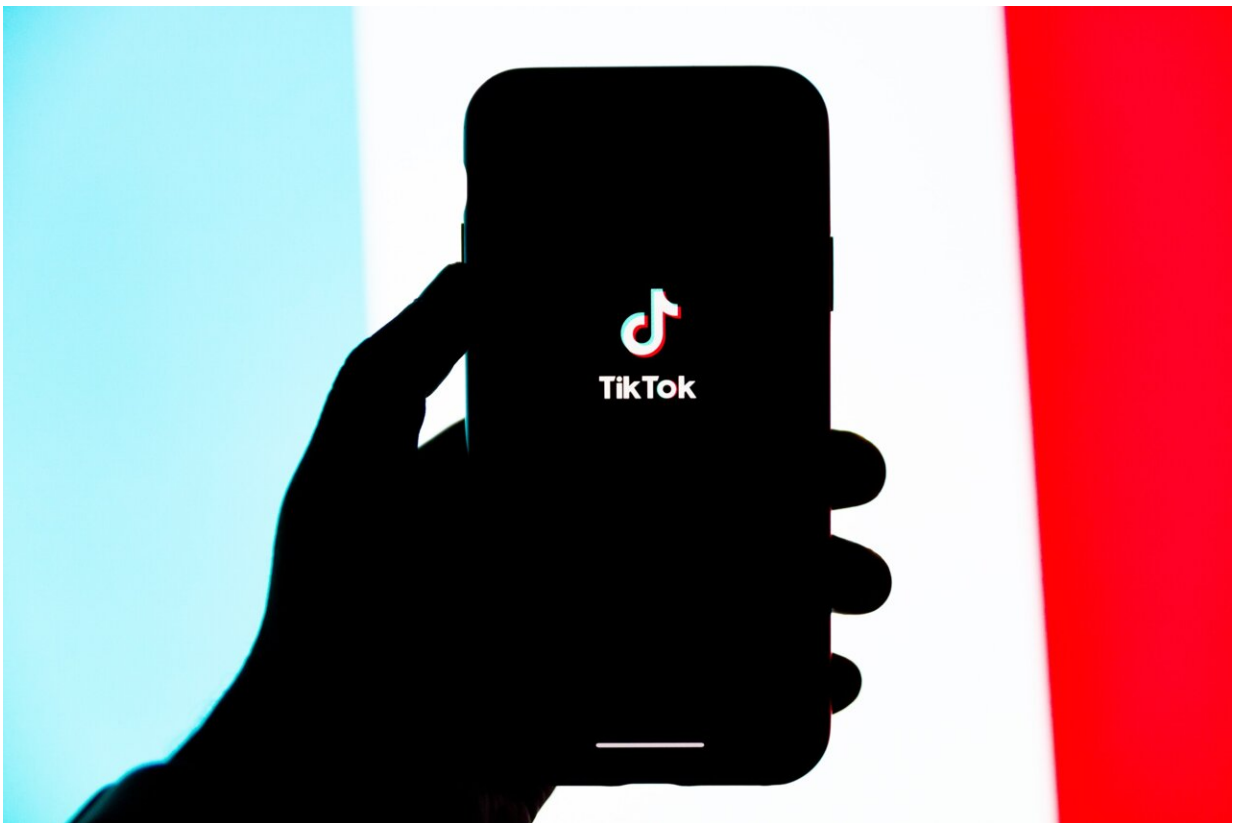


It's time to use TikTok to talk to young people about obesity, says researcher

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There is an urgent need to harness the potential of TikTok and other social media channels to provide scientific information about obesity to young people in engaging and accessible way, the [European Congress on Obesity](#) (ECO) in Venice, Italy (12-15 May) will hear.

The popularity and broad reach of such platforms provides the opportunity to reach diverse audiences, including teenagers and young adults, explains lead researcher Dr. Antonella Franceschelli, of Unicamillus International Medical University, Rome, Italy.

The percentage of obese children and adolescents worldwide more than quadrupled among girls (from 1.7% to 6.9%) and among boys (from 2.1% to 9.3%) between 1990 to 2022.

Italy has the fourth highest rate of childhood overweight and obesity in Europe, with almost 40% of children aged 7 to 9 years living with overweight or obesity. This compares to a European average of 29%.

"The growing obesity epidemic, particularly among young people, represents a global challenge that requires innovative approaches," says Dr. Franceschelli. "Over 90% of teenagers have at least one social media account and their [social media presence](#) continues to grow.

"Food and beverage brands capitalize on this trend by using social media to market their products, including unhealthy ones, to teens. But there is also huge potential use social media to disseminate [scientific information](#) on obesity and nutrition and support teenagers and [young adults](#) in eating healthily."

To learn more about this potential, Dr. Franceschelli and colleagues analyzed metrics from the Dr. Anthos TikTok account. Run by Dr.

Franceschelli, this Italian language account contains short videos about the treatment of obesity. This includes information on [healthy eating](#), exercise and drug treatments, as well as live Q&As with doctors.

The content was divided by topic and the number of views for each video counted.

In total, 108 videos posted from September 2021 to February 2024 were analyzed. The videos were watched 4,631,982 times in total, giving an average number of views per video of 42,495.

Videos about obesity medication were the most popular, with an average number of views per video of 135,945.

The most watched [video](#), which was about semaglutide, was watched almost one million (959,536) times. The audience was 57% female, and 4% (approx. 38,000) were young people aged 18-24 years.

Videos about combating the stigma that can be associated with obesity drew 23,587 viewers on average and those on healthy eating attracted 10,262 viewers, on average.

Live Q&As, which provide the opportunity to put questions to an obesity specialist, attracted up to 2,000 participants each, with sessions on stigma generating a particularly large amount of discussion between patients and with the doctor.

The researchers concluded that social media is a powerful vehicle for communicating scientific data in a powerful and engaging way.

Dr. Franceschelli says, "We need to find new ways to talk to young people about obesity. Social media channels like TikTok offer a unique opportunity to reach them in a fun and creative way and engage them in

meaningful discussions about health. Through short videos, it is possible to share information about obesity prevention, healthy eating habits, the importance of physical activity and other topics.

"Furthermore, using TikTok to address [obesity](#) can help combat the stigma associated with the condition. By creating an online community of support and sharing [success stories](#) and [personal experiences](#), it is possible to promote a culture of acceptance and support for those struggling with their weight. There is no time to be lost in harnessing this potential."

Provided by European Association for the Study of Obesity

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