

Online health education: usefulness and reliability of atopic dermatitis information in a video-sharing platform

Educación sanitaria en línea: utilidad y fiabilidad de la información sobre dermatitis atópica en una plataforma para compartir vídeos

Educação em saúde online: utilidade e confiabilidade das informações sobre dermatite atópica em uma plataforma de compartilhamento de vídeos

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***Corresponding author:**denniscf@gmail.com**Submission:** 11-14-2025**Approval:** 12-05-2025**Abstract**

This study aims to assess approaches to atopic dermatitis on the YouTube™ video-sharing platform, examining the content provided by the authors to explain the topic, focusing on the usefulness, reliability, and description of the information related to the condition accessible to users. A total of 37 videos were selected and subsequently assessed for usefulness based on established criteria. Reliability and clarity were evaluated using a standardized tool designed for assessing health information quality, and the content presented in the videos was analyzed using a previously developed questionnaire. The results indicate that most videos lack refinement, with only 30% clearly explaining the concept of atopic dermatitis. Associated and triggering factors of the disease were described in only 27% of the videos. Although 49% were produced by healthcare professionals, many videos failed to meet all reliability criteria, with only two achieving a full score. The absence of information on diagnosis and treatment was notable, with 78% of the videos not mentioning diagnosis. It is concluded that, although the video-sharing platform is accessible for disseminating knowledge, the quality of information needs to be improved to better educate the public about atopic dermatitis in children.

Descriptors: Atopic Dermatitis; Child Health; Technology and Society; Chronic Non-Communicable Diseases; Information Quality.

Resumen

Este estudio tiene como objetivo evaluar los enfoques sobre la dermatitis atópica en la plataforma de videos YouTube™, examinando el contenido proporcionado por los autores para explicar el tema, centrándose en la utilidad, confiabilidad y descripción de la información relacionada con la afección accesible para los usuarios. Se seleccionaron un total de 37 videos y posteriormente se evaluó su utilidad con base en criterios establecidos. La confiabilidad y la claridad se evaluaron utilizando una herramienta estandarizada diseñada para evaluar la calidad de la información de salud, y el contenido presentado en los videos se analizó utilizando un cuestionario desarrollado previamente. Los resultados indican que la mayoría de los videos carecen de precisión, y solo el 30% explica claramente el concepto de dermatitis atópica. Los factores asociados y desencadenantes de la enfermedad se describieron en solo el 27% de los videos. Aunque el 49% fueron producidos por profesionales de la salud, muchos videos no cumplieron con todos los criterios de confiabilidad, y solo dos obtuvieron la puntuación máxima. La ausencia de información sobre diagnóstico y tratamiento fue notable, ya que el 78% de los videos no mencionaba el diagnóstico. Se concluye que, si bien la plataforma para compartir videos es accesible para la difusión de conocimientos, es necesario mejorar la calidad de la información para educar mejor al público sobre la dermatitis atópica en niños.

Descriptores: Dermatitis Atópica; Salud Infantil; Tecnología y Sociedad; Enfermedades Crónicas no Transmisibles; Calidad de la Información.

Resumo

Objetivou-se avaliar as abordagens à dermatite atópica na plataforma de compartilhamento de vídeos YouTube™, examinando o conteúdo fornecido pelos autores para explicar o tema, com foco na utilidade, confiabilidade e descrição das informações relacionadas à condição acessíveis aos usuários. Um total de 37 vídeos foram selecionados e posteriormente avaliados quanto à utilidade com base em critérios estabelecidos. A confiabilidade e a clareza foram avaliadas utilizando uma ferramenta padronizada desenvolvida para avaliar a qualidade da informação em saúde, e o conteúdo apresentado nos vídeos foi analisado por meio de um questionário previamente elaborado. Os resultados indicam que a maioria dos vídeos carece de refinamento, com apenas 30% explicando claramente o conceito de dermatite atópica. Fatores associados e desencadeadores da doença foram descritos em apenas 27% dos vídeos. Embora 49% tenham sido produzidos por profissionais de saúde, muitos vídeos não atenderam a todos os critérios de confiabilidade, com apenas dois obtendo a pontuação máxima. A ausência de informações sobre diagnóstico e tratamento foi notável, com 78% dos vídeos não mencionando o diagnóstico. Conclui-se que, embora a plataforma de compartilhamento de vídeos seja acessível para disseminar conhecimento, a qualidade da informação precisa ser melhorada para educar melhor o público sobre dermatite atópica em crianças.

Descriptores: Dermatite Atópica; Saúde da Criança; Tecnologia e Sociedade; Doenças Crônicas Não Transmissíveis; Qualidade da Informação.



Introduction

Atopic dermatitis (AD) is a chronic, inflammatory, and non-contagious skin disease that can be hereditary, leading to the development of lesions and itching. It is highly prevalent in children but can also occur in adults^{1,2}. Over the past three decades, the incidence of AD has increased, establishing it as a public health concern, particularly among children, with most cases emerging within the first year of life³. According to the International Study of Asthma and Allergies in Childhood (ISAAC), the global prevalence of AD in children aged 6 to 7 years was 7.9%⁴. In Brazil, the prevalence among children in the same age group was 7.3% in 2012⁵.

Children with atopic diseases experience a reduced quality of life, as discomfort from the condition can disrupt sleep, interfere with daily activities, and require medical expenses that may be burdensome for families³. Given the multifactorial nature of AD, there has been growing interest in examining the influence of online information on clinical and home management of the disease. YouTube™ plays a prominent role in disseminating guidance through videos in various formats, raising concerns about the authenticity of the content available on the platform, a subject previously explored in research⁶. This study found that patient experience-based videos garnered more views and engagement than those published by professional sources.

The internet is an integral part of daily life, providing content for diverse audiences with varying levels of education. As a result, it significantly influences public perceptions and decision-making⁷. This study highlights that, while the internet offers convenient access to information on AD, much of the content is incomplete or lacks scientific rigor, potentially leading to complications for patients.

This study is particularly relevant given the impact of online information on the care of patients with AD. While YouTube™ facilitates the rapid and free dissemination of educational content, it is an open platform where users can share opinions, experiences, and, at times, misleading information. This lack of accountability regarding information sources poses challenges to effective AD treatment. The notion of freedom of expression often fosters the belief that anyone can share opinions on social media, regardless of their accuracy⁸.

The international studies have been published and indicate that YouTube™ is widely used when seeking information about atopic dermatitis. A total of 211 videos were studied by cross-sectional research that analyzed YouTube™ content about atopic dermatitis, and 42 videos were considered useful. Universities, organizations, and healthcare professionals did not publish videos with unreliable content⁹. Other studies were subsequently developed, including a study that related the content quality of AD videos and their viewers' perceptions, among other aspects (Mueller). And a second study evaluated psoriasis and atopic eczema in YouTube™ and Google® search about geographic and temporal trends^{10,11}.

This study sought to address the following research questions: "Are the AD-related videos on YouTube™ useful and reliable enough to contribute to patient care?" and

"What descriptions do these videos provide to support and enhance disease management?". Accordingly, the study aimed to examine how atopic dermatitis is presented on YouTube™, assessing the content shared by video authors in terms of usefulness, reliability, and the description of information accessible to users.

Understanding the sources of knowledge that individuals access on social media can help nurses provide better care and guidance. This, in turn, enables healthcare professionals to correct misconceptions and offer evidence-based recommendations, ensuring that patients receive accurate and practical information for managing AD.

Methodology

This study employs a documentary research design with a quantitative, observational, and retrospective approach. The research was conducted online using the YouTube™ video-sharing platform. The study participants consisted of user-generated videos related to atopic dermatitis that were selected for this research. The inclusion criteria were as follows: videos had to be among the first 100 results displayed when searching the platform using the terms "atopic dermatitis in childhood" and "atopic dermatitis in children". The selection of the first 100 videos was documented similarly in a previously published study¹², and only videos posted in Portuguese. The exclusion criteria included: videos that do not discuss atopic dermatitis or reference other types of dermatitis; videos in the format of lectures or conferences; videos mentioning a specific brand, medication, or advertisements; videos in which the author does not mention "child", "children", or "childhood"; videos with broken or inaccessible links; and private videos.

Data were collected between March and April 2024. To maintain consistency, video collection was conducted on a single day for each search term. This approach was chosen due to the platform's continuous updates and uploads, which influence the ranking and organization of videos based on relevance rather than chronological order, according to YouTube™'s algorithm. The data collection process was structured as follows: on the designated date, videos were identified and recorded in a Microsoft Excel® spreadsheet, including their respective links. Then, each video was accessed and underwent a secondary selection based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria.

The selected videos were categorized according to their usefulness¹³. Videos classified as useful were further assessed using a modified DISCERN questionnaire, which consists of adapted questions designed to assess the reliability of the videos. The DISCERN instrument provides a brief yet reliable assessment of the quality of health-related information¹⁴. It employs a scoring system, assigning 1 point for each "yes" response and 0 points for each "no" response. Each video received a reliability score ranging from 0 to 5, with the following classifications: low reliability (scores below 3), moderate reliability (scores of 3), and high reliability (scores above 3)¹⁵.

Additionally, a structured questionnaire⁷ was applied, comprising questions aimed at deepening the understanding of online content evaluation. The collected



data underwent descriptive analysis, with results presented in tables using simple and relative frequency distributions. Before applying the selected evaluation instruments, intra-examiner training and calibration were conducted using Cohen's Kappa test, which yielded a score of 0.768 in the pilot study, indicating a strong level of agreement.

This study was conducted in compliance with the "Guidelines on Ethics in Research in Virtual Environments", published by Fiocruz in 2020¹⁶. Special attention was given to ensuring the anonymity of video authors, and no personally identifiable or sensitive information was used. According to the document, this study is exempt from ethical review as it falls under the category of documentary research, utilizing publicly and unrestrictedly accessible information.

Results

The search on the selected platform was conducted while accessing the site as a visitor, without being logged into any account, to prevent the influence of a specific user's algorithm on the results. A total of 200 videos were retrieved. The first search query ("atopic dermatitis in childhood") resulted in 100 videos, with one duplicate

identified, which was retained only once. The second search query ("atopic dermatitis in children") yielded 35 duplicate videos, many of which were already present in the first search. After removing duplicates, the first search resulted in 99 unique videos, while the second search resulted in 65 unique videos.

Each video was then individually analyzed to exclude those that did not meet the study's inclusion criteria. Excluded videos contained characteristics that were not relevant to the study and could potentially introduce bias. After this screening process, 48 videos from "atopic dermatitis in childhood" and 4 videos from "atopic dermatitis in children" remained and were used in the subsequent research stages.

In the next phase, the videos were classified according to their usefulness¹³, as presented in Chart 1. Notably, across both searches, a total of 37 videos were considered useful. These categorized videos were then assessed for reliability, where two videos received the highest possible score, as they answered all evaluation items positively, demonstrating high content reliability. Additionally, 12 videos were classified as having good reliability.

Chart 1. Classification of videos according to Delli's utility criterion¹⁰ and Discern reliability¹². Rio de Janeiro, RJ, Brazil, 2024

Videos (atopic dermatitis in childhood)	Number of videos (n=52)
Useful	35
Misleading	6
Personal experience	7
Total	48
Videos (atopic dermatitis in children)	
Useful	2
Misleading	2
Personal experience	0
Total	4
Score (Discern)	Number of videos (n=37)
> 3 - Good reliability	14
3 - Moderate reliability	10
< 3 - Low reliability	13

Chart 2 presents the average values for video duration, number of likes, and views. A significant discrepancy can be observed in the second item (number of likes) and the number of views, with one video being viewed by only 47 people, while another has over one million views. Additionally, video duration also exhibits considerable variation, ranging from the shortest video - YouTube™ Short, which belongs to a category of videos up to 60 seconds long

- to the longest video, which lasts 47 minutes. The structured questionnaire consists of a set of questions designed to provide a deeper understanding of the content presented in each video¹⁷. Each question offers three response options: yes - when the information of interest was satisfactorily presented; partially - when it was only partially presented; and no - when it was not presented or described (Chart 3).

Chart 2. Evaluation of videos based on average duration, views, and "number of likes". Rio de Janeiro, RJ, Brazil, 2024

37 Videos	Atopic dermatitis in children and atopic dermatitis in childhood (37 useful videos)	Videos with good reliability ¹² (14 videos)
Duration (minutes)		
Average	7min 40seg	12min 4seg
Min - Max	0:53 – 47:35	1:19 – 47:35



Likes/"Number of likes"		
Average	4.000	3.807
Min - Max	1 - 38 mil	1 - 15mil
Views		
Average	145.570	147.098
Min - Max	47 - 1.400.000	62 - 608.000

The first question aimed to determine how many of the 37 evaluated videos addressed the concept of atopic dermatitis, assessing the clarity and effectiveness of information delivery. The responses classified the information as unclear and not well-explained (partially) or clear and understandable (yes). The results showed closely distributed values, with a predominance of the partial classification, indicating that the description of atopic dermatitis was often imprecise. This trend may be related to the format of the uploaded videos, which are often

structured to convey information of particular interest to the content creator. Instead of producing a single, lengthy video, creators may choose to divide content into a series of shorter videos, each addressing a specific topic - such as one for diagnosis, another for treatment, and so on. By adopting this segmented content strategy, creators may avoid repeating the explanation of atopic dermatitis in each video. This approach could explain the higher number of partial classifications in the analysis.

Chart 3. Questionnaire on information collected from the selected videos⁷. Rio de Janeiro, RJ, Brazil, 2024

Questions	Yes n (%)	Partially n (%)	No n (%)
1. Does it describe the concept of AD?	11 (30)	16 (43)	10 (27)
2. Was it published by a professional or official health organization?	18 (49)	13 (35)	6 (16)
3. Does it correlate with a specific health specialty?	13 (35)	9 (24)	15 (41)
4. Does it mention or explain triggering/ aggravating/ associated factors for AD occurrence?	10 (27)	11 (30)	16 (43)
5. Is the language understandable for laypersons?	30 (81)	7 (19)	0 (0)
6. Does it describe home care for symptom relief in AD?	10 (27)	15 (41)	12 (32)
7. Does it describe problems and/or impacts on the patient's social life?	9 (24)	4 (11)	24 (65)
8. Does it describe how the diagnosis should be made?	5 (14)	3 (8)	29 (78)
9. Does it provide information on treatments and clinical follow-up?	8 (22)	9 (24)	20 (54)

It was also observed that most of the videos were published by professionals or official health organizations, but a large portion did not correlate atopic dermatitis with specialties.

Another finding was that most of the explanations about triggering factors and those related to the occurrence of atopic dermatitis were partially presented. This may indicate that the information provided was more generic, without specifying which habits, attitudes, or exposures contribute to the worsening of the condition.

Most of the videos described home remedies to alleviate the symptoms of atopic dermatitis in a general way, without detailing how to perform them. Question 7 shows a result where 24 videos, or 64%, did not describe the impact of the disease on the patient's social life. This could reflect a health model focused on discussing diseases, which tends to

direct more attention to physical problems of the human body. Both questions 8 and 9, related to the description of diagnosis and clinical follow-up, had "no" as the main response, highlighting the lack of information on these topics in the atopic dermatitis videos.

Discussion

The findings of this study reveal that the videos on atopic dermatitis still present inconsistencies that deserve attention. Viewers need to seek additional information beyond what is provided in the videos, as they may contain inaccuracies and be incomplete. It was observed that the concept of atopic dermatitis is still not clearly explained in most of the videos, with only 27% of them providing an accurate description of the condition. Some international studies corroborate these findings. One study that evaluated

the quality of AD videos on YouTube™ showed that 68% had poor quality and approximately 62% were of very poor quality¹⁰. In a second study, atopic eczema was more prevalent than psoriasis in terms of time and location of searches on YouTube™ and Google®. The results showed activity increased on Google® and decreased on YouTube™ for atopic eczema¹¹. Moreover, the factors associated with and triggering atopic dermatitis are not properly clarified, being mostly described in a partial manner (43%) in the videos, without detailed explanations. In a similar study on atopic dermatitis in sites found through Google®, it was observed that most pages accurately describe the triggering and/or aggravating factors for dermatitis flare-ups⁷. It is believed that, due to the average video duration of only 7 minutes, the authors avoid pointing out the factors that may worsen the disease, potentially causing misunderstandings among family members, as triggers will not always be the same for all patients.

Another interesting finding was that most of the videos were uploaded by health professionals or official health organizations (around 84%), while only a small percentage of the videos dealt with personal experiences (13%), with informative videos about atopic dermatitis predominating on YouTube™. Most of the sources of information used in creating the videos were considered reliable (30 of the 37 videos analyzed), which is positive. However, in terms of overall reliability of the videos, evaluated using the DISCERN tool, only two videos met all the reliability criteria, while the majority scored average due to failure to meet all the requirements.

Considering that most of the videos were uploaded by health professionals, a higher reliability score on the DISCERN tool was expected. Professionals must consider minimum quality criteria when publishing health-related videos on the Internet¹⁸.

In addition, only 13 videos mentioned areas of uncertainty, which is believed to be due to the authors' preference for addressing aspects of AD for which they have clear answers, thus avoiding generating doubts or a lack of credibility. However, this approach may limit the viewers' comprehensive understanding of the disease, who are seeking answers and solutions to their concerns.

Surprisingly, 78% of the videos did not explain how to diagnose AD, and 54% did not provide information about treatment, despite almost half of the authors being health professionals from various specialties. For laypersons who do not have a trained eye for identifying the condition, it is easy to confuse AD with other similar skin conditions, such as psoriasis or urticaria. Therefore, understanding that the diagnosis is clinical, as well as knowing the treatment options, is essential to prevent future complications.

Many patients trust online information more than the assessment of a healthcare professional due to the independence that the internet provides¹⁹. It is believed that, for this reason, authors prefer not to disclose AD treatments that could be taken out of context and cause harm to a patient.

The repercussions of the disease on the patient's life are rarely addressed in the videos. About 65% of the

videos did not describe information regarding the social impacts that atopic dermatitis can cause in an individual's life. According to a previous study²⁰, children with AD have an elevated risk of developing mental health issues, such as emotional reactivity and sleep difficulties, with a higher risk in patients with more severe forms of the disease.

Home care for relieving the symptoms of AD is partially addressed in 41% of the videos, while 27% describe these satisfactorily, and approximately 32% do not mention them. The fact that it does not mention the use of home remedies may be a positive point as it does not encourage self-medication, especially with over-the-counter medications, such as topical corticosteroids.

The predominance of colloquial language (81%) shows that the video authors are concerned with creating an accessible environment with information that is easy to understand for all types of audiences. It was noted that all the evaluated videos (100%) presented information in a balanced and impartial manner. However, it is important to highlight that in the first stage of this research, 60 videos were excluded for containing brand and product advertisements.

The following result is significant considering the context in which the videos are placed, as a platform accessible by any individual, regardless of their level of education. The preference for using short words and popular language is an evident trend across all social media platforms, and YouTube™ is no exception. The study findings confirm this by showing that nearly 100% of the videos use language that is comprehensible to laypersons.

Analyzing the amount of information on home remedies for symptom relief and the repercussions of AD on the patient's life is crucial. How an individual manages atopic dermatitis depends on several factors, such as symptom severity, age, and other psychological aspects. In this regard, how a person copes with and accepts AD is also linked to the care they and their family members provide at home, impacting the entire health-disease process and the individual's quality of life.

A key limitation of this study is the fragmentation of the videos, with many focusing on different aspects of atopic dermatitis separately. This disjointed approach may hinder viewers from gaining a comprehensive understanding of the condition, as important connections between concepts like diagnosis, triggers, and treatment are not always clearly presented. Additionally, repeated information across videos may reduce the overall educational value, as well as the use of a few search terms, which differs from Freemyer's study that used more terms⁹.

Conclusion

YouTube™ is a valuable platform for disseminating information about atopic dermatitis, but there is still a need to improve the quality of the content presented. It is believed that developing research to assess digital media and establish guidelines for creating online health content can be highly beneficial in enhancing the quality of shared videos. It is important to emphasize that, today, the digital medium exerts significant influence on many people's daily



lives, so healthcare professionals need to use the internet to spread information, thus contributing to quality education for all.

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