

UCLA

UCLA Previously Published Works

Title

Use of YouTube to reduce mental health stigma

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/5tc8p485>

Journal

International Journal of Social Psychiatry, 64(4)

ISSN

0020-7640

Authors

Woo, Benjamin KP

Lam, Nikki HT

Kung, Eddie

Publication Date

2018-06-01

DOI

10.1177/0020764018765217

Copyright Information

This work is made available under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives License, available at

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

Peer reviewed

Use of YouTube to reduce mental health stigma

Benjamin KP Woo, Nikki HT Lam and Eddie Kung

International Journal of
Social Psychiatry
2018, Vol. 64(4) 406–407
© The Author(s) 2018
Reprints and permissions:
sagepub.co.uk/journalsPermissions.nav
DOI: 10.1177/0020764018765217
journals.sagepub.com/home/isp


We read with great interest the study by MacLean, Basch, Reeves, and Basch (2017) which examined the content of YouTube videos focused on generalized anxiety disorder (GAD) that were both in English and had reached at least 50,000 views. Their study showed that 65% of the videos were uploaded by consumers and 56% were about personal experience. Most videos included treatment options, but only 26% mentioned causes of GAD. The length of videos ranged between 1 and 59 minutes. These findings highlight a few points with implications for research and clinical practice.

First, the authors expanded on previous studies demonstrating that individuals with mental illnesses are turning to YouTube to share about their illness experiences and to seek support (Naslund, Aschbrenner, Marsch, & Bartels, 2016). While understanding main variables in popular mental health videos is important, researchers and health care professionals must also be sensitive of cultural and language differences among subpopulations. Previous research showed that higher quality of online mental health information was obtained with English than with other languages (Tsiang & Woo, 2017). Furthermore, less is known about the content and quality of online mental health information shared among ethnic groups. Hence, evaluation of YouTube mental health videos in all languages could provide insights for relieving and navigating through cultural stigma associated with mental illnesses.

Second, the frequent inclusion of GAD treatment options in popular YouTube videos may not necessarily imply that there is more information on treatment than on causes of GAD on social media. Previous studies have found that YouTube videos with more emphasis on treatment and caregivers' roles in mental health intervention generated more views and longer watch time (Lam, Tsiang, & Woo, 2017; Lam & Woo, 2018; Woo & Chung, 2018; Zheng & Woo, 2017). Nevertheless, understanding causes of mental illnesses may promote interests in learning treatment options, which could lead to better communication between patients, caregivers and health professionals. Therefore, future studies should identify ways to increase the popularity of YouTube videos focused on causes of mental illnesses.

Third, although the YouTube videos generated at least 50,000 views, the authors had no way of knowing audience retention (e.g. average view duration) without video analytics. The study reported that the median length of the

videos was 6 minutes, which coincides with the reported average view duration of 6–7 minutes found in other studies on YouTube mental health videos with variable lengths (Lam et al., 2017; Woo, 2017). The limited attention span in video-based online education underscores the need for developing effective psychoeducation videos with focused and interactive content that are at most 6 minutes long. A recent study further recommended investment in pre-production lesson planning to segment videos into chunks shorter than 6 minutes (Guo, Kim, & Rubin, 2014). Finally, as YouTube become the mainstream method of information seeking, viewer appeals must be addressed by making the first few minutes engaging.

This study provides important insights into the content of 95 popular YouTube videos with at least 50,000 views on GAD. With more than 1 billion YouTube users, understanding the role of using such cost-effective and widely distributed media in psychoeducation efforts is an important and timely topic. As YouTube remains a new form of psychoeducation, future studies should further examine the limits of YouTube videos for individuals suffering from GAD.

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

References

- Guo, P. J., Kim, J., & Rubin, R. (2014). How video production affects student engagement: An empirical study of MOOC videos. In ACM Editorial Board (Ed.), *Proceedings of the First ACM Conference on Learning @ Scale Conference* (pp. 41–50). New York, NY: ACM.
- Lam, N. H., Tsiang, J. T., & Woo, B. K. (2017). Exploring the role of YouTube in disseminating psychoeducation. *Academic Psychiatry, 41*, 819–822.
- Lam, N. H., & Woo, B. K. (2018). Exploring the role of YouTube in delivering dementia education to older Chinese. *Asian Journal of Psychiatry, 31*, 25–26.

Department of Psychiatry and Biobehavioral Sciences, University of California, Los Angeles, CA, USA

Corresponding author:

Benjamin KP Woo, Department of Psychiatry and Biobehavioral Sciences, University of California, 14445 Olive View Drive, Sylmar, Los Angeles, California 91342, USA.
Email: bkpwoo@ucla.edu

- MacLean, S. A., Basch, C. H., Reeves, R., & Basch, C. E. (2017). Portrayal of generalized anxiety disorder in YouTube™ videos. *International Journal of Social Psychiatry*, 63, 792–795.
- Naslund, J. A., Aschbrenner, K. A., Marsch, L. A., & Bartels, S. J. (2016). The future of mental health care: Peer-to-peer support and social media. *Epidemiology and Psychiatric Sciences*, 25, 113–122.
- Tsiang, J. T., & Woo, B. K. (2017). Comparison of online dementia information in Chinese and in English languages. *Cureus*, 9, e1808.
- Woo, B. K. (2017). Dementia health promotion for Chinese Americans. *Cureus*, 9, e1411.
- Woo, B. K., & Chung, J. O. (2018). Using YouTube analytics to evaluate a Chinese video-based lecture regarding Parkinson's disease. *Journal of Clinical Neuroscience* pii: S0967-5868(17)32250-6.
- Zheng, X., & Woo, B. K. (2017). E-mental health in ethnic minority: A comparison of YouTube and talk-based educational workshops in dementia. *Asian Journal of Psychiatry*, 25, 246–248.