

Docs on TikTok: The Benefits and Risks Physicians Experience on TikTok

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Introduction

There is a growing community of healthcare workers posting videos on Tik Tok, physicians included, thus serving as an avenue to enhance medical education, improve patient care, and expand career opportunities.

Previous studies have used researchers analyze social media posts to define professional behavior and opportunities online; however, there is little data on the physician-user's perspective.^{1,2}

Our objective is to gain insight into the experiences of physician "TikTok-ers," while delineating potential risks and benefits to healthcare they have recognized during their own social media engagement.

Materials and methods

We developed a questionnaire assessing career impact, risks, and benefits identified by DO and MD physicians with over ten thousand followers on TikTok. The questionnaire was distributed via the physicians' social media accounts and the data was analyzed, classifying themes connecting common experiences.

Literature cited

1. George DR, Rovniak LS, Kraschnewski JL. Dangers and opportunities for social media in medicine. *Clin Obstet Gynecol.* 2013;56(3):453-462.
2. Hazzam J, Lahrech A. Health Care Professionals' Social Media Behavior and the Underlying Factors of Social Media Adoption and Use: Quantitative Study. *J Med Internet Res.* 2018;20(11):e12035. Published 2018 Nov 7.

Results

In total, 55 physicians across 20 specialties completed the questionnaire. Approximately 24% (13/55) have been posting medical content on social media for less than one year, with over 75% (44/55) for fewer than five years. The average reported benefit and risk to their careers were 3.14/5 and 2.2/5, respectively (Figures 1 and 2).

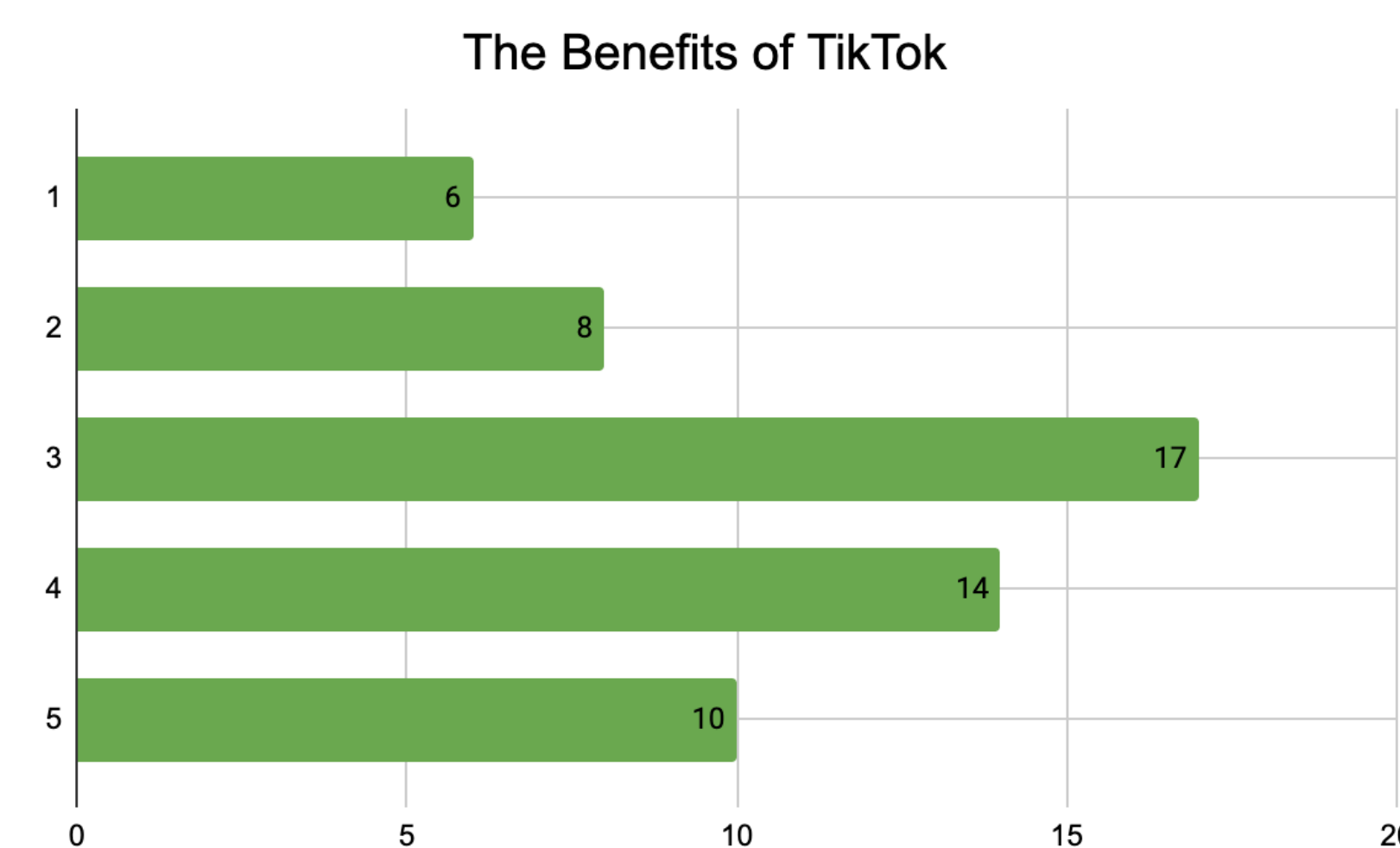


Figure 1: Physician reported level of benefit they have experienced due to their presence posting medical content on TikTok. Scaled from 1 (Not Beneficial) to 5 (Most Beneficial).

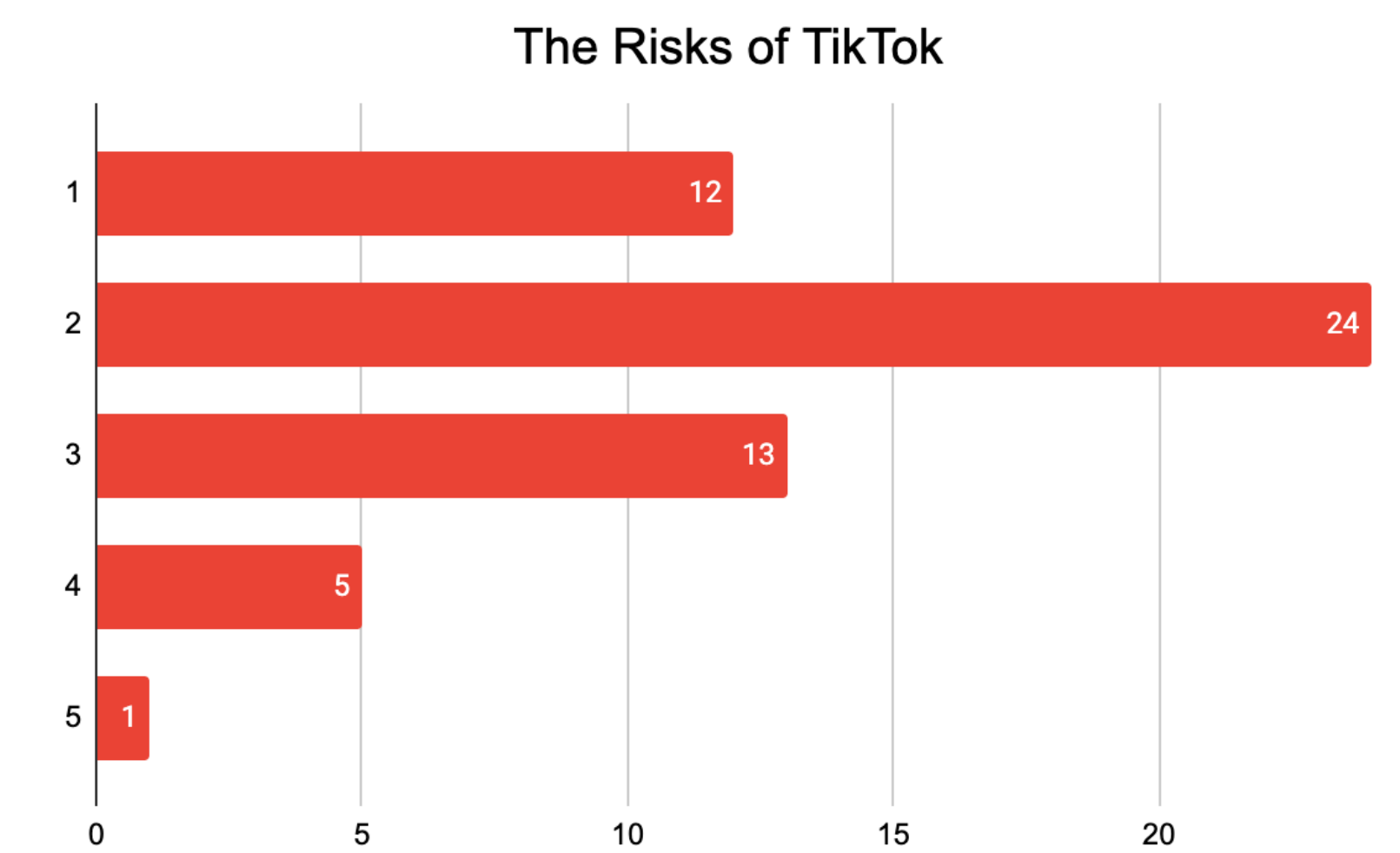


Figure 2: Physician reported level of risk they have experienced due to their presence posting medical content on TikTok. Scaled from 1 (No Risk) to 5 (Most Risk).

Overall, 76% of physicians saw TikTok having positive impacts to their practices with benefits including opportunities in education, community engagement, discovering creative outlets, and patient empowerment. With 22% reporting no impact and 2% reporting some negative impact, identified risks included potential HIPPA violations, professionalism concerns, controversial medical data, and blurred patient boundaries.

Overall Impact of TikTok Activity on Medical Career

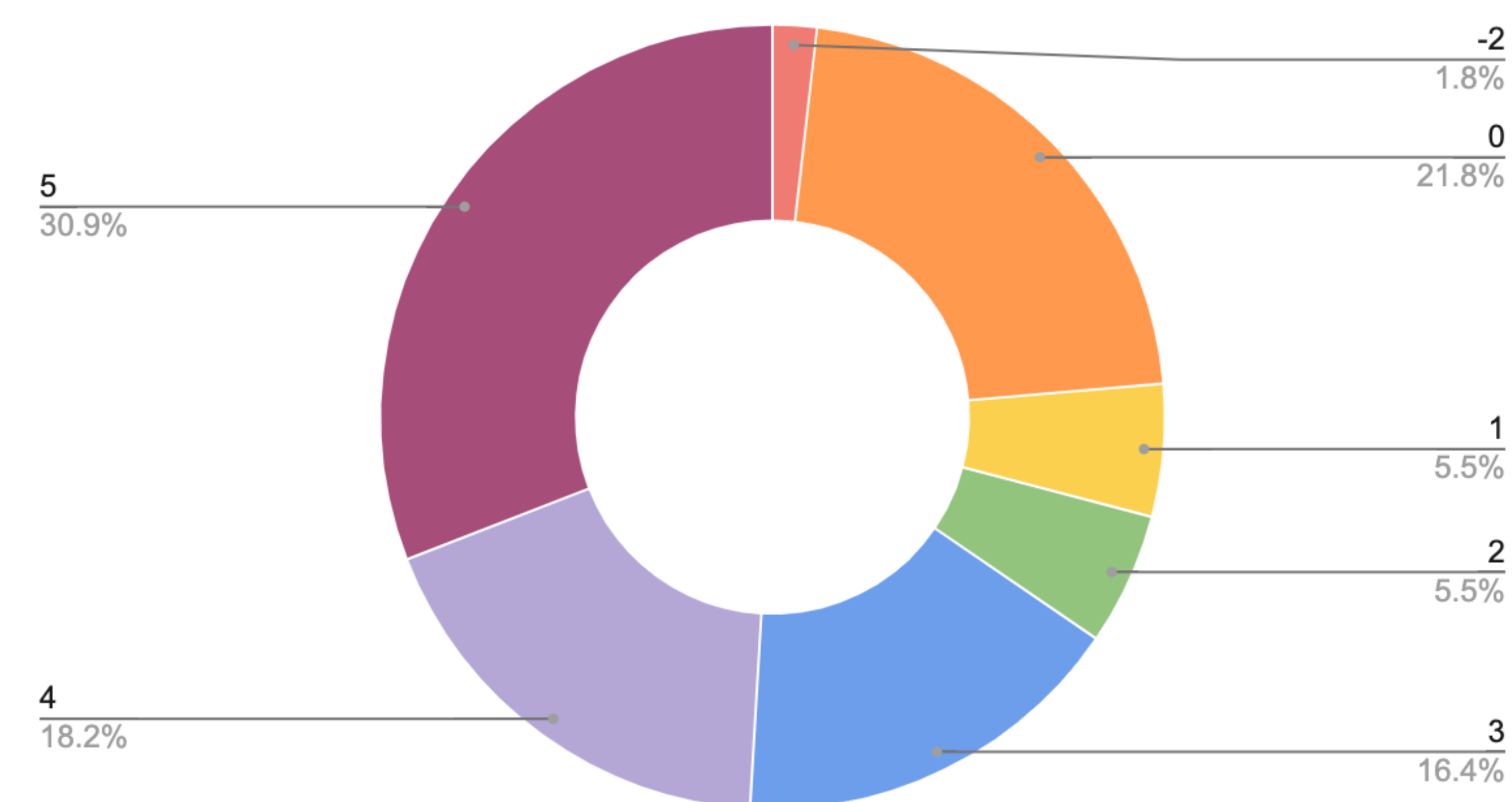


Figure 3: Overall career impact physicians experienced with regards to posting medical content on social media (-5: Most Negative, 0: Neutral/No Effect, 5: Most Positive)

Conclusions

Physicians are making their presence known on social media, and TikTok provides no exception. As most of these physicians have quickly gained popularity in just under a year, this has created additional opportunities to beneficially engage with a broad online audience. According to surveyed physicians, the benefits provided a stronger positive impact to their careers when compared with risks.

Our study suggests that this social media platform is viewed as generally more beneficial than risky at least among very popular users. Tik Tok represents another way for continuing medical education, contact with patients, and discussion of topics relevant to doctors in their practice



Figure 4: Most commonly reported content used to describe the benefits, risks, and career impact physicians have experienced on TikTok

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No Conflicts of Interest to disclose.

Further information

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