# More than half of top mental health TikToks found to spread misinformation



A recent investigation has revealed that over half of the top-trending TikTok videos offering mental health advice are rife with misinformation. This troubling finding underscores the alarming trend of social media users seeking guidance on mental health issues from platforms that often disseminate dubious advice, where individuals may unwittingly consume misleading content with potentially harmful consequences.

The research, conducted by The Guardian, reviewed the 100 most popular videos associated with the #mentalhealthtips hashtag, finding that 52 of these contained some form of misinformation. Among the dubious claims were suggested methods for anxiety reduction, such as consuming an orange in the shower, as well as the promotion of supplements like saffron and magnesium glycinate that lack substantial evidence to support their effectiveness. Furthermore, some content proposed that trauma could be healed within a mere hour, presenting gross oversimplifications of complex mental health issues.

Experts critiqued these videos for their misuse of therapeutic language, which can create confusion about mental health conditions. David Okai, a consultant neuropsychiatrist at King’s College London, noted how the interchangeable use of terms like "wellbeing," "anxiety," and "mental disorder" could mislead audiences regarding the nuances of mental health care. Such oversimplifications not only harm those seeking support but may also trivialise the lived experiences of individuals with serious mental health conditions.

This issue is part of a broader narrative regarding the reliability of information found on social media, especially platforms like TikTok, where content tends to prioritise brevity and sensationalism over accuracy. Dan Poulter, a former health minister, expressed concern that some videos might pathologise everyday feelings, contributing to a culture where normal emotional responses are misinterpreted as indicators of serious disorders. This could potentially mislead vulnerable individuals, leading them to adopt inappropriate self-diagnosis or treatment paths based on misleading information.

Numerous studies underscore the prevalence of misinformation on social media. For instance, research published in the Journal of Medical Internet Research found that claims pertaining to cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) often misrepresented its efficacy for certain groups, such as those with trauma histories or neurodevelopmental disorders. Such misinformation can hinder people from receiving effective treatment, exacerbating their conditions and contributing to a climate of confusion and stigma surrounding mental health.

The University of British Columbia also conducted a similar analysis focusing on TikTok videos about attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). The results indicated that fewer than half of the claims made about ADHD symptoms were consistent with established clinical guidelines, reinforcing concerns that social media platforms are a breeding ground for misinformation that could lead to misleading self-diagnosis and misunderstanding among young users.

This rise in mental health misinformation has prompted calls from experts and MPs for stricter regulations on social media content. The technology committee chaired by Labour MP Chi Onwurah is currently investigating the effectiveness of the Online Safety Act, aiming to address concerns about the algorithms that propagate misleading or harmful health information. Victoria Collins, a Liberal Democrat MP, has joined the chorus advocating for more decisive government action to safeguard the mental well-being of social media users against such misinformation.

Despite assurances from TikTok that it actively removes content deemed harmful and collaborates with health organisations like the NHS, the platform’s role in disseminating misinformation cannot be overlooked. Critics argue that while social media can foster community and dialogue surrounding mental health, the risks associated with unverified advice could have dire consequences for those in need of actual support.

As the conversation surrounding mental health continues to evolve, it is essential that individuals recognise the limitations of social media advice and seek guidance from qualified professionals. Experts have reiterated that mental health issues require individualised treatment from accredited clinicians who can provide tailored support rather than blanket advice from viral videos. In a landscape increasingly dominated by quick-fix solutions, the priority must remain on evidence-based practices and fostering an informed public equipped to navigate the complexities of mental health care.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/may/31/more-than-half-of-top-100-mental-health-tiktoks-contain-misinformation-study-finds), [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/may/31/more-than-half-of-top-100-mental-health-tiktoks-contain-misinformation-study-finds)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/may/31/more-than-half-of-top-100-mental-health-tiktoks-contain-misinformation-study-finds), [[3]](https://www.jmir.org/2023/3/e45571/), [[5]](https://petrieflom.law.harvard.edu/2025/04/02/dr-tiktok-the-impacts-of-misinformation-on-mental-health-self-diagnosis/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[4]](https://news.ubc.ca/2025/03/adhd-misinformation-on-tiktok/), [[6]](https://neurosciencenews.com/tiktok-adhd-psychology-28496/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[3]](https://www.jmir.org/2023/3/e45571/), [[7]](https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/denying-to-the-grave/202412/debunking-tiktoks-mental-health-misinformation)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/may/31/more-than-half-of-top-100-mental-health-tiktoks-contain-misinformation-study-finds), [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/may/31/more-than-half-of-top-100-mental-health-tiktoks-contain-misinformation-study-finds)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/may/31/more-than-half-of-top-100-mental-health-tiktoks-contain-misinformation-study-finds), [[6]](https://neurosciencenews.com/tiktok-adhd-psychology-28496/)
* Paragraph 7 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/may/31/more-than-half-of-top-100-mental-health-tiktoks-contain-misinformation-study-finds), [[7]](https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/denying-to-the-grave/202412/debunking-tiktoks-mental-health-misinformation)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/may/31/more-than-half-of-top-100-mental-health-tiktoks-contain-misinformation-study-finds> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/may/31/more-than-half-of-top-100-mental-health-tiktoks-contain-misinformation-study-finds> - A Guardian investigation reveals that over half of the top 100 TikTok videos offering mental health advice contain misinformation. The study highlights the spread of dubious advice, including misused therapeutic language, promotion of unproven supplements like saffron and magnesium glycinate, and methods claiming to heal trauma within an hour. Experts and MPs express concern over the prevalence of harmful mental health advice on social media platforms and call for stronger regulations to protect the public from misinformation.
3. <https://www.jmir.org/2023/3/e45571/> - A study published in the Journal of Medical Internet Research analyses TikTok videos discussing cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT). The research identifies prevalent misinformation, such as claims that CBT is ineffective for individuals with a history of trauma, autism, or ADHD, despite evidence supporting its efficacy in these groups. The study underscores the role of both self-proclaimed mental health professionals and laypeople in disseminating harmful mental health misinformation on social media platforms like TikTok.
4. <https://news.ubc.ca/2025/03/adhd-misinformation-on-tiktok/> - A University of British Columbia study examines the 100 most-viewed TikTok videos related to attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). The analysis reveals that fewer than half of the claims about ADHD symptoms align with clinical guidelines for diagnosing the disorder. The study highlights the potential for TikTok to spread misinformation, leading to misunderstandings and inaccurate self-diagnosis among young adults.
5. <https://petrieflom.law.harvard.edu/2025/04/02/dr-tiktok-the-impacts-of-misinformation-on-mental-health-self-diagnosis/> - An article from the Petrie-Flom Center discusses a study published on March 19, 2025, which found that more than half of the claims about ADHD in TikTok videos lack scientific accuracy. The study highlights concerns about the spread of health misinformation on social media platforms and its impact on mental health self-diagnosis, particularly among young adults.
6. <https://neurosciencenews.com/tiktok-adhd-psychology-28496/> - A study published on March 19, 2025, examines popular ADHD-related content on TikTok and its alignment with clinical guidelines. The research finds that less than half of the claims in these videos match professional diagnostic criteria, potentially influencing young adults' perceptions of the disorder. The study emphasizes the need for mental health professionals to engage in social media discussions to ensure accurate, evidence-based resources reach viewers.
7. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/denying-to-the-grave/202412/debunking-tiktoks-mental-health-misinformation> - An article in Psychology Today discusses the prevalence of mental health misinformation on TikTok, citing a 2023 study published in the Journal of Medical Internet Research. The study found that misinformation about cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) is common on TikTok, with claims that CBT is ineffective for individuals with a history of trauma, autism, or ADHD, despite evidence supporting its efficacy in these groups. The article highlights the role of both self-proclaimed mental health professionals and laypeople in spreading harmful mental health misinformation on social media platforms.