TikTok Therapy: An Exploratory Study on Popular TikTok Mental Health Content

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As social media trends evolve, teenagers are predominantly using Snapchat, TikTok, and Instagram (Piper Sandler Companies, 2020) with youth in the United States spending more time on TikTok versus other social media apps (MMGuardian, 2021). One TikTok trend reported on by news outlets (e.g., TODAY) is the rise of ‘TikTok therapy,’ where teenagers use the app for mental health information/advice. While research is needed, teenagers may be seeking this advice in response to increased levels of stress, uncertainty, and depression among teenagers (American Psychological Association, 2020), as well as growing mental health care provider shortages (e.g., MacDowell et al., 2012). Given that TikTok mental health content may be applied to support individuals’ mental health and well-being, it is crucial to understand this content and determine its credibility. If the content is evidence-based, TikTok offers a platform for disseminating public health and medical education (Comp et al., 2020), including mental health information. Yet, there is no known research exploring this area. Thus, to examine if the available TikTok content focused on mental health is credible, this poster presentation will provide findings from an exploratory study on whether the trending (i.e., most likes or designated as “Hot”) mental health TikTok videos (n=400) at separate, randomized time points include evidence-based content (accurate versus inaccurate statements based on existing research) and if they have been created by trained professionals or content creators without a mental health background (based on self-report of background/credentials). Implications and future directions of TikTok mental health research will be discussed.