

A Cross-Sectional Study of YouTube Videos as a Source of Information Regarding Biologics for Hidradenitis Suppurativa

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Introduction

Hidradenitis suppurativa (HS) is a chronic inflammatory skin condition characterized by painful nodules, abscesses, skin tunnels, and scarring [1]. Current first-line biologic agents for HS include adalimumab and the newly FDA-approved secukinumab [2]. Given YouTube's role as a popular source of health information, this cross-sectional study aimed to analyze YouTube videos on the use of biologics for HS to better understand the information accessible to patients on this platform.

Findings

On 15 July 2024, a YouTube search was conducted using the terms "biologics hidradenitis suppurativa" and "hidradenitis suppurativa biologics" on a private browser. The top 200 videos from each search were screened, with 67 videos included in the final analysis (Figure 1).

A majority (N=52) of videos were created by medical professionals, with physician-centered videos accounting for 40 (76.92%) of these. Most physician-centered videos presented clinical evidence on the efficacy of biologics (N=28),

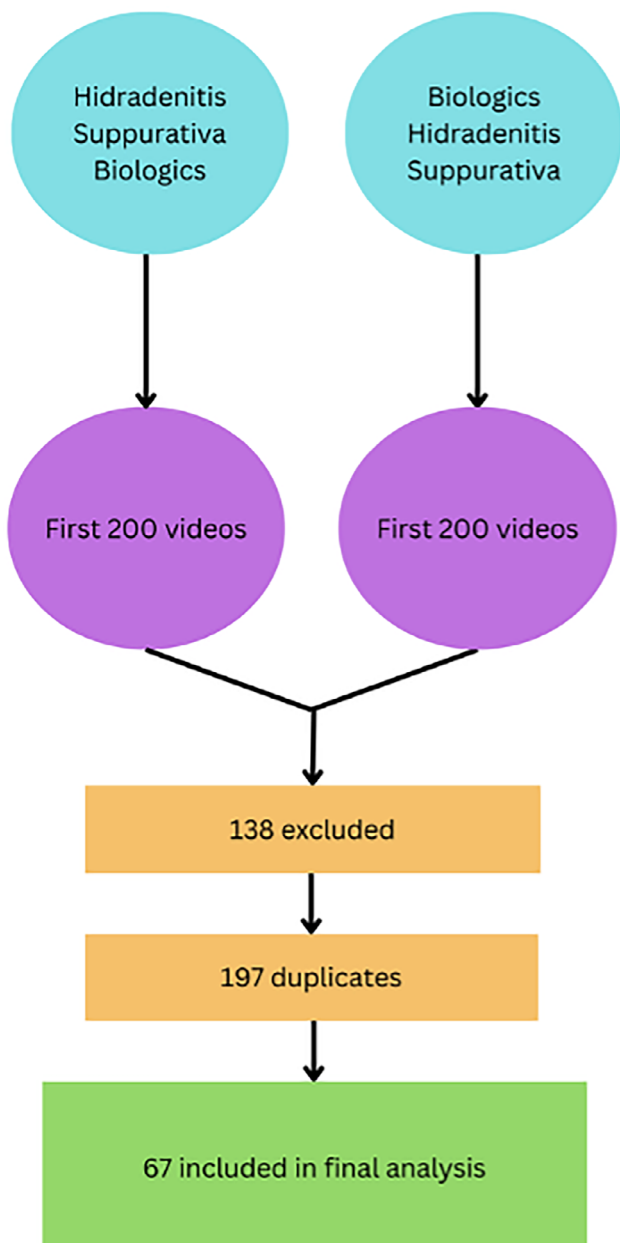


Figure 1. Analysis algorithm of the study.

while a few discussed their use during pregnancy (N=1) and in children (N=2). Twelve of the videos created by medical professionals were patient-centered. These primarily discussed the mechanisms, efficacy, and safety of biologics in layman's terms (N=11), and one video discussed their use during pregnancy.

Among videos not created by medical professionals, ten were produced by nonprofit organizations run by patients featuring medical professionals who delivered the content. One video featured an individual who interviewed a physician about HS. These videos covered a range of topics: the mechanisms, efficacy, and side effects of biologics (N=6), safety of biologics during the COVID-19 pandemic (N=1),

safety of biologics during pregnancy (N=2), and their use in pediatric patients (N=1).

Only four videos included patient perspectives and experiences with biologics (N=4). One patient stated that adalimumab helped him immensely, as he had been anorexic and bedridden prior to starting the biologic. Other videos presented adverse effects such as developing psoriasis and one patient's preference for lifestyle modifications over biologics.

Videos created by medical professionals had a higher mean number of views (9458) but a lower median (371) compared to those created by non-medical professionals (mean 3954, median 503). The standard deviation of views was higher for videos created by medical professionals (30,845) than non-medical professionals (13,355), indicating greater variability in views among the former.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates the need for more patient-centered videos featuring medical professionals (34.32% of the total analyzed) and more videos featuring patient experiences (N=4) with biologics. Patients have noted that information from internet forums and anecdotes from loved ones can provide reassurance regarding starting biologics [3]. Furthermore, a lack of education regarding biologics and concerns about adverse effects are barriers to starting treatment [3]. Thus, patient-centered videos featuring medical professionals and patient anecdotes may help alleviate such barriers, further highlighting the need for more such videos on YouTube.

While this study did not utilize evidence-based video metrics like the DISCERN score, these tools are outside the study's scope of general content analysis and categorization by target audience and engagement. Future studies could incorporate these tools to provide a more detailed assessment of the quality of YouTube videos about biologics for HS.

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