

The Dark Side of Provider Presence on Social Media

#PaidPartnership #Ad

Danielle Green-Serdarov, Taylor Hosey, Gina Ronga, Daniella Veliz, Victoria Salvatore, Jennifer Walker

Advisor: Pauline Papapietro, PA-C
Biomedical Ethics

Introduction

- “Medical social media (SoMe) has continued to grow in popularity and complexity with an estimated 90% of clinicians using it personally and 65% professionally” (Keller EJ, et. al 2022).
- Providers are using social media to create content on medicine, with around 85% of viewers turning to social media to seek information regarding their health.
- Due to wide variability of content posted on social media, providers can post medical advice for viewers or be compensated for promotion of specific procedures, companies and products.
- Providers are bound by the hippocratic oath, which fails to mention the use of social media and its future implications in healthcare.
- The gray area of social media and the use in healthcare has led to ongoing debates about its role in the future care of patients.

Pros

- Can provide accessible healthcare information to those who can not afford it
- Makes people aware of health resolutions that they were previously unaware of
- Can promote positive health practices while encouraging preventative care and healthy lifestyle choices
- Can make people aware of the newest procedures and medications available
- Collaboration of providers from different specialties who may not have otherwise interacted
- Providers who are certified and educated are able to correct misinformation on social media from other social media accounts
- People can gain medical information from licensed professionals instead of seeking information on unreliable websites

Case Study

- Jane Doe is a 24 year old female that frequently clenches her jaw (bruxism), leading to her having chronic headaches. By chance, Jane watched a Tik Tok created by a cosmetic healthcare provider promoting a procedure called masseter botox, which is aimed at reducing jaw muscle tension in individuals with bruxism. Jane promptly schedules an appointment with this provider. At her appointment, the provider eagerly administers the botox to Jane without explaining the potential risks of this treatment. The next day, Jane experienced significant bruising at the injection sites. It was then discovered that Jane currently takes Eliquis daily in order to treat a prior deep vein thrombosis (DVT). Guidelines suggest that patients should discontinue anticoagulants 10 to 14 days prior to botox administration due to increased risk of severe bruising (Witmanowski H, Blochowiak, 2020). The provider that performed this procedure wasn't concerned with obtaining a proper health history. They overlooked contraindications of this procedure because they were more concerned about making a profit (Gupta et. al, 2020).

Literature Review

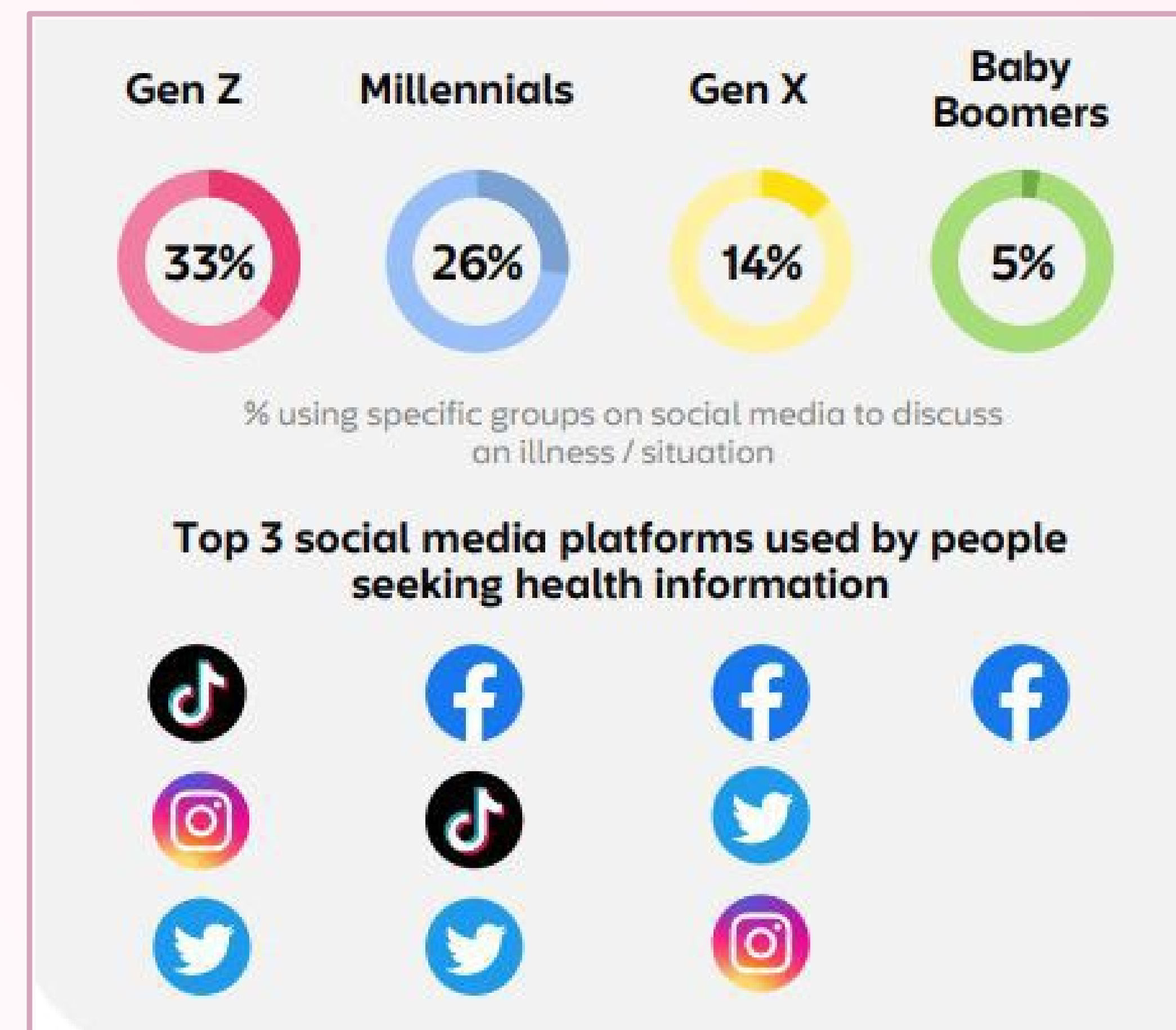
- “Likewise, over half of clinicians report using SoMe for educational purposes, and 85% of the general public use SoMe to connect with and seek healthcare information” (Keller EJ, et. al 2022).
- “Social media platforms have become a digital town hall for all manner of healthcare information exchange, further democratizing access to information historically under the sole purview of physicians” (Mesko B, Spiegel B, 2022).
- “Family physicians who accept payment for their content should consider if the content is consistent with current standards of care and evidence-based medicine. Ultimately, this is a personal decision, but it could impact a family physician’s reputation. Additionally, family physicians should be aware of laws surrounding promotion” (Nguyen BM, et. al 2020).

Ethical Principles

- **Beneficence:** An ethical principle stating that the healthcare provider should always act with intent of benefitting and doing good by the patient. Healthcare providers promoting themselves and procedures for their own monetary benefit may or may not be in the best interest of the patient.
- **Nonmaleficence:** The healthcare provider must assess each situation carefully before making decisions and must be aware of how their decisions impact others. When providers promote various medical treatments and procedures they are promoting to a non-specific audience that may not benefit from their advice.

Cons

- Viewers believe the medical procedures they see on social media will benefit them without being properly informed of contraindications or adverse effects
- Viewers are relying on social media platforms for health information instead of seeking personalized care from a licensed provider
- Viewers undergo procedures they may not be able to afford
- Children and adolescent viewers purchase products that are not age appropriate for them
- Providers participating in paid partnerships promote products for their monetary benefit, rather than the viewers benefit
- Viewers are requesting unnecessary screenings from their healthcare providers based on what they see on social media
- Surpasses boundaries in regards to the provider-patient relationship via discussion in the comments



Future Implications

- Social media should require disclaimers on posts promoting medical procedures and treatments.
- Providers who aim to issue medical advice on social media should be required to submit licensure
- Medical providers using social media should be trained on how to correctly advertise their services.
- Healthcare practices should implement regulations for their providers and interactions with online viewers.



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