#COVIDVACCINE: AN ANALYSIS OF TRENDING CONTENT ON TIKTOK

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Background:
TikTok is a popular platform where users engage with health information about COVID-19. The unique algorithm of TikTok requires visibility labour as it demands performativity, interactivity, relatability, authenticity, and entertainment from its content creators. This study investigates the discourse about vaccinations from 100 trending TikTok videos using the most prominent hashtag, #covidvaccine, which received 1.4B views at the time of collection.

Methods:
On 4 July 2021, the top 100 trending videos were collected for analysis. The videos were algorithmically ordered on the discover feature and collected in that order to replicate a user search. The dataset included videos from November 2020 to July 2021. We collected the metadata for each video then coded for themes, rhetoric, and intonation towards COVID-19 vaccines. Intercoder reliability was substantial at (k=0.79).

Results:
The majority of the trending videos were created by influencers (n=73) and non-professional users (n=67). No official organisation accounts appeared in this sample, despite a vaccination campaign running on TikTok with the World Health Organization in the months prior. Content was largely positive in tone towards COVID vaccines (n=59). Neutral videos were less prominent (n=30) and offered an ambiguous framing of vaccines. Negative (n=6) and even mixed tone (n=5) videos were infrequent.

Conclusion:
Whilst TikTok provides links to guide its users to official COVID-19 public health information, much of the COVID-19 vaccine information in our sample came from unofficial sources. There is also a distinct language that health communicators must use, and a certain type of visibility labour, to gain the attention of TikTok audiences and influencers. This study highlights some of the challenges for health communicators who need to understand the language and logic of TikTok in order to find effective ways to communicate on such a pathos-centric platform dominated by influencers, personal commentary, and humour.