

OB-GYNs of TikTok: #periodproblems, politics and platform affordances

Educational and informational content has been a major trend on the short-form video platform TikTok, even before the launch of official platform initiatives like #Edutok. Fuelled by the pandemic, health information and health worker creators have gained a lot of attention on the platform, with doctors, nurses, and medical specialists from a range of backgrounds using their expertise to create content, while also raising their own profile. TikTok has significant reach with younger audiences, but these informal health information networks and their specific workings on the platform remain underexamined. This paper examines gynecological 'infotainment' — content that focuses on sharing information about vaginal and vulva health in accessible, informative and entertaining ways. In this presentation I will focus on OB-GYNs on TikTok, examining the techniques they use to engage their audiences. I draw on findings from a digital ethnography project, in which I analysed and observed healthcare workers creating content on TikTok — of which OB-GYNs emerged as a significant part of this community. Creators seamlessly integrated feminist politics, medical expertise, humour and intimacy, to build rapport with viewers. My findings highlight the way that OB-GYNs draw on the affordances of TikTok to create playful 'infotainment', engaging in audiomeme-making and personal disclosure, as well as responding to viral trends.

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