

RESEARCH LETTER

Celebrity News and Dermatologic Conditions: A Google Trends Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Celebrities can provide much needed support for chronic conditions, giving a much needed public spotlight to conditions otherwise not commonly known in the general public. Disease awareness can drive attention and support towards organizations that provide much needed research and treatment to those affected. We sought to identify and quantify the public interest related to fifteen dermatology-related celebrity events, using google trends search data. Our analysis revealed a 765% monthly and 660% daily average increase in RSV during a celebrity event period, driving a transient surge in public interest of the associated dermatologic conditions. While the increased interest appears to be transient and closely tied to the event itself, our results highlighting the notable influence that public figures have in shaping public interest, driving much needed support to those affected.

INTRODUCTION

Celebrities have had an outsized influence on popular culture trends and awareness for various causes. In healthcare and aesthetics, celebrities play a major role in promoting disease awareness and procedure interest.¹⁻⁵

⁵ Google trends is an effective way to gauge relative interest in topics of concern, offering insights into the popularity of a topic over time.¹ As celebrities become more comfortable revealing personal health diagnoses, including dermatologic conditions, they help raise public awareness about the significance of these diagnoses. Our study aims to identify celebrity events or announcements associated with a specific

dermatologic condition and analyze their impact on public awareness and knowledge.

METHODS

Google Trends was used to quantify the relative search volume (RSV), a relative scale of search popularity, for 15 dermatologic conditions that came to widespread attention in reference to a celebrity event in the United States (**Table 1**). The monthly RSV from 2004 to 2024 associated with each dermatologic condition was recorded. Additionally, as the two-month average RSV, consisting of the daily RSV one month prior to and one month after each celebrity event, was retrieved. Percent difference from daily and monthly averages

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Table 1. Event Descriptions - News and popular magazine article examples for each event described

Condition	Event Relation to Condition	Article Title	Article Link
Merkel Cell Carcinoma (Jimmy Buffet Death)	Jimmy Buffet dies of Merkel Cell Carcinoma	Jimmy Buffett Died of Rare Form of Skin Cancer	https://www.nytimes.com/2023/09/04/arts/music/jimmy-buffett-merkel-cell-skin-cancer.html
Gianotti–Crosti syndrome (Mandy Moore Announcement)	Mandy Moore announces her son is diagnosed with Gianotti–Crosti syndrome	Mandy Moore’s son was diagnosed with Gianotti-Crosti syndrome. Here’s what that means	https://www.cnn.com/2023/08/01/health/gianotti-crosti-syndrome-rash-wellness/index.html
Dermatomyositis (Suhani Bhatnagar Death)	Child actress Suhani Bhatnagar dies at 19 of Dermatomyositis	What Is Dermatomyositis, The Rare Disease 'Dangal' Actor Died Of	https://www.ndtv.com/offbeat/all-you-need-to-know-about-dermatomyositis-the-rare-disease-dangal-actor-suhani-bhatnagar-died-of-5079466
Perioral dermatitis (Hailey Bieber Announcement)	Hailey Bieber posts a video of herself with perioral dermatitis.	Hailey Bieber Opens Up About Living with Perioral Dermatitis After ‘Pretty Bad Flare Up’	https://people.com/hailey-bieber-tiktok-perioral-dermatitis-skin-condition-8622677
Psoriasis (Kim Kardashian Announcement)	Kim Kardashian visits her dermatologist during an episode of “Keeping Up With the Kardashians”	Kim Kardashian's Psoriasis Helps Others Live in Own Skin	https://abcnews.go.com/Health/kim-kardashian-psoriasis-diagnosis-helps-women-deal-devastating/story?id=14180711
Alopecia (2022 Oscars Slap)	Will Smith slaps Chris Rock after Rock makes a remark about Jada Smith’s hair during the 2022 Oscars.	Oscars controversy shines a light on Jada Pinkett Smith’s ‘struggle’ with alopecia	https://www.cnn.com/style/article/jada-pinkett-smith-alopecia-oscars-controversy/index.html

Systemic lupus erythematosus (Selena Gomez Announcement)	Selena Gomez announces she has Lupus	Selena Gomez's disease: What is lupus?	https://www.cnn.com/2015/10/08/health/selena-gomez-reveals-she-has-lupus/index.html
Scleroderma (Bob Saget Death)	Bob Saget's sister died of scleroderma, for which he was a lifelong advocate.	What to Know About Scleroderma, the Autoimmune Disease Bob Saget Fought for Before His Death	https://people.com/health/what-to-know-about-scleroderma-the-autoimmune-disease-bob-saget-fought-for-before-his-death/
Vitiligo (Michael Jackson Death)	Michael Jackson dies, has had vitiligo for many years prior.	Michael Jackson has died	https://www.theguardian.com/music/2009/jun/25/michael-jackson-dead
Bullous pemphigoid (Charo Husband Death)	Spanish actress Charo's husband dies of suicide, had been living with bullous pemphigoid.	What to Know About the Chronic Skin Disorder Charo's Husband Faced Before His Suicide	https://people.com/health/what-to-know-bullous-pemphigoid-charo-husband-death/

was calculated. Data on the most common related queries associated with each year were also collected.

DISCUSSION

Analysis revealed a 765% monthly and 660% daily average increase in RSV during the celebrity event period (**Table 2**). Jimmy Buffet's death due to Merkel Cell Carcinoma had the highest overall percent increases of all recorded celebrity events in association with a dermatologic condition (4088% monthly increase; 3085% daily increase) (**Table 2**). The celebrity event represented the top search query for that condition in two thirds (n=10, 67%) of the 15 events studied (**Table 3**). On average, there were increases in RSV one day and month prior to each event (53.27 and 70.65, respectively). Over

the following days (33.6 one day post-event and 22.8 two days post-event) and months (49.07 one month post-event and 6.73 two months post-event), interest steadily decreased. There was an RSV of 100 during the month of the event for 87% (n = 13) of the celebrity events. An average RSV of 98.53 was calculated during the month of the event and an average RSV of 95.87 during the day of the event.

Our analysis revealed a substantial rise in search activity following celebrity publicity of a dermatologic condition; however, this increased interest appears to be transient and closely tied to the event itself. While Google Trends can measure part of the public's engagement through search volume, other factors such as social and traditional media still represent a large portion of public

Table 2. Daily 2-month average and 2004-to-present monthly research search volume and multiple of increase during event

Condition	Average RSV (Monthly)	Multiple (Monthly)	Average RSV (Daily)	Multiple (Daily)
Alopecia	8.1	12.3	3.9	25.8
Bullous pemphigoid	35.8	2.8	6.6	9.2
Dermatomyositis	51.4	1.9	39.3	2.5
Epidermolysis bullosa	20.4	4.9	21.4	3.6
Gianotti–Crosti syndrome	4.2	23.8	3.7	26.8
Granuloma annulare	63.5	1.6	16.5	6.1
Herpes	66.1	1.5	30.1	3.3
Lyme disease	46.3	2.2	6.9	14.4
Merkel Cell Carcinoma	2.4	40.9	3.2	30.8
Perioral dermatitis	34.5	2.4	38.7	2.6
Psoriasis	65.3	1.5	18.5	5.4
Sarcoidosis	15.4	6.5	6.4	15.7
Scleroderma	20.9	4.8	7.2	13.8
Systemic lupus erythematosus	44.6	2.2	11.9	8.4
Vitiligo	18.5	5.4	13.4	7.5
Average:	33.2	7.6	15.2	6.6
Standard Deviation:	22.3	10.9	12.3	9.4

engagement. Additionally, it is unknown whether there was a relative increase in

related health behaviors, such as obtaining procedures or treatments for skin disorders

or financial support for patient organizations. However, our findings highlight the notable

influence that public figures have in shaping public interest through disease awareness

Table 3. Top search position of event-related queries for dermatologic conditions during year of event. *was not present as a top query during the year but was present during the 2-month period surrounding the event.

Condition	Position
Merkel Cell Carcinoma (Jimmy Buffet Death)	1
Gianotti–Crosti syndrome (Mandy Moore Announcement)	2
Dermatomyositis (Suhani Bhatnagar Death)	1
Perioral dermatitis (Hailey Bieber Announcement)	*
Psoriasis (Kim Kardashian Announcement)	1
Alopecia (2022 Oscars Slap)	1
Systemic lupus erythematosus (Selena Gomez Announcement)	1
Scleroderma (Bob Saget Death)	1
Vitiligo (Michael Jackson Death)	2
Bullous pemphigoid (Charo Husband Death)	1
Granuloma annulare (Katelyn Ohashi Announcement)	7
Herpes (Usher Lawsuit)	1
Epidermolysis bullosa (Eddie Vedder Award Show)	3
Sarcoidosis (Bernie Mac Death)	1
Lyme disease (Justin Bieber Announcement)	1
Average:	1.7
Standard Deviation:	1.6

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