

Reasonably accurate, bite-sized headlines:

“Expert reviewers find that the studies and related articles shared in social media linking something with a health result are likely to be overstated and/or inaccurate.”

“Review study finds that the health research we see in our social media feeds is likely to be overstated and/or inaccurate.”

“Expert review panel study finds that the headlines in your social media feed that say that a study links something with a health outcome are likely to be overstated and inaccurate.”

“Headlines in your social media feed that say ‘X is linked to some health outcome’ are unlikely to represent strong evidence that X actually causes the the outcome.”

Maybe a slightly cheekier one: “Correlation does not imply causation, unless you are the language describing results of studies shared in social media about the links between things and health outcomes.”

There are a few key points that are emphasized in the above tweets. Firstly, they specifically point out that these are items that are picked up in social media, and not representative of all of academia or media. Secondly, they emphasize what this study is: a review from a panel of skilled reviewers. Most importantly, these headlines don’t say certain tempting misinterpretations of this study.

Inaccurate headlines:

“Academia is producing a lot of health studies that are weak, wrong, and/or exaggerated.”

“The media inaccurately reports on scientific findings.”

“The effect of social media on science reporting.”

“Social media is the reason that science can’t have good things.”

The problem here is that this study was not designed to ask these questions and show these results. The first two are improved quite a bit if you add “that you are likely to see in social media,” but still not great. We might get some hints as to some of this going on, but we really need more study to do so. The last two are inaccurate because we don’t actually look at the causal effect (see what we did there?) of social media on studies or media.

If you want to talk about this study in public, whether you’re writing an article or tweeting, we strongly recommend contacting us first. We’re happy make sure what you write is an accurate description of our work.