

| Study finds support for these hypotheses | |
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| <i>Justification:</i> | <i>Hypotheses supported by this study:</i> |
| Primary study conclusions drawn from the main objectives, design, and results of this study. Replication, validation, and critical review of the methods and conclusions by independent parties are still necessary before results should be considered conclusive. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The academic articles assessing the relationship between an exposure and health outcome that were most shared on social media in 2015 have, on average: - Relatively low strength of causal inference - Slightly overstated strength of causal language - The media articles that were most shared on social media in 2015 reporting on academic articles assessing the relationship between an exposure and health outcome have, on average: - Overstated strength of causal language relative to both the language used in the academic article and independently-assessed strength of causal inference in that article - Inaccurate reporting on key properties of the study. |
| Study DOES NOT assess or find support for these hypotheses | |
| <i>Justification:</i> | <i>Hypotheses not assessed/supported by this study:</i> |
| This study DOES NOT assess these hypotheses. Reporting any of these conclusions as a result of this study is inaccurate and a misrepresenting the results and conclusions of this study. At most, these hypotheses remain plausible given the results of this study, and could be considered hypothesis-generating. However, additional review studies specifically designed to assess these questions are necessary in order to add any substantial weight to these hypotheses. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Academic institutions, including researchers, universities, and journals, produce mostly weak and/or overstated evidence. - Media institutions systematically misreport and overstate findings and/or select low strength studies on which to report. - Social media and the public systematically select and share misreported, exaggerated, and/or low strength of causal inference findings |
| https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0196346.t003 | |

Explicitly state
claims **not supported**
by the research

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.