



United  
Italian  
Societies



# Clinician and public perspectives on incretin receptor agonists for metabolic health in Italy

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# Project Overview

## How Common Are GLP-1 Drugs Like Ozempic? 13% of U.S. Adults Have Used Them

THE LANCET

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COMMENT · Volume 402, Issue 10402, P586-588, August 19, 2023

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SURMOUNT-2: new advances for treating obese type 2 diabetes with tirzepatide

[Christian Seerup Frandsen](#)<sup>a</sup>  · [Sten Madshad](#)<sup>b</sup>

Incretin receptor agonists are a new class of drugs that revolutionized the field of metabolic disease.

The enormous popularity they received is reflected by a considerable amount of discussion on social media regarding such drugs

Given the large amount of opinions shared online, patient themselves present to their healthcare professionals with opinions and requests, not always matching the therapeutic indications

Here, we performed a mixed-methods analysis combining the creation and analysis of a dataset of Reddit discussions about incretin receptor agonists with interviews to unbiased Italian healthcare professionals, to explore the dynamics of patients' opinions on these medicinal products and their repercussions on the patient-clinician relation



# Quantitative and Qualitative parts

In the **quantitative section**, we analysed how public conversations evolved worldwide over time and across topics on **Reddit**.

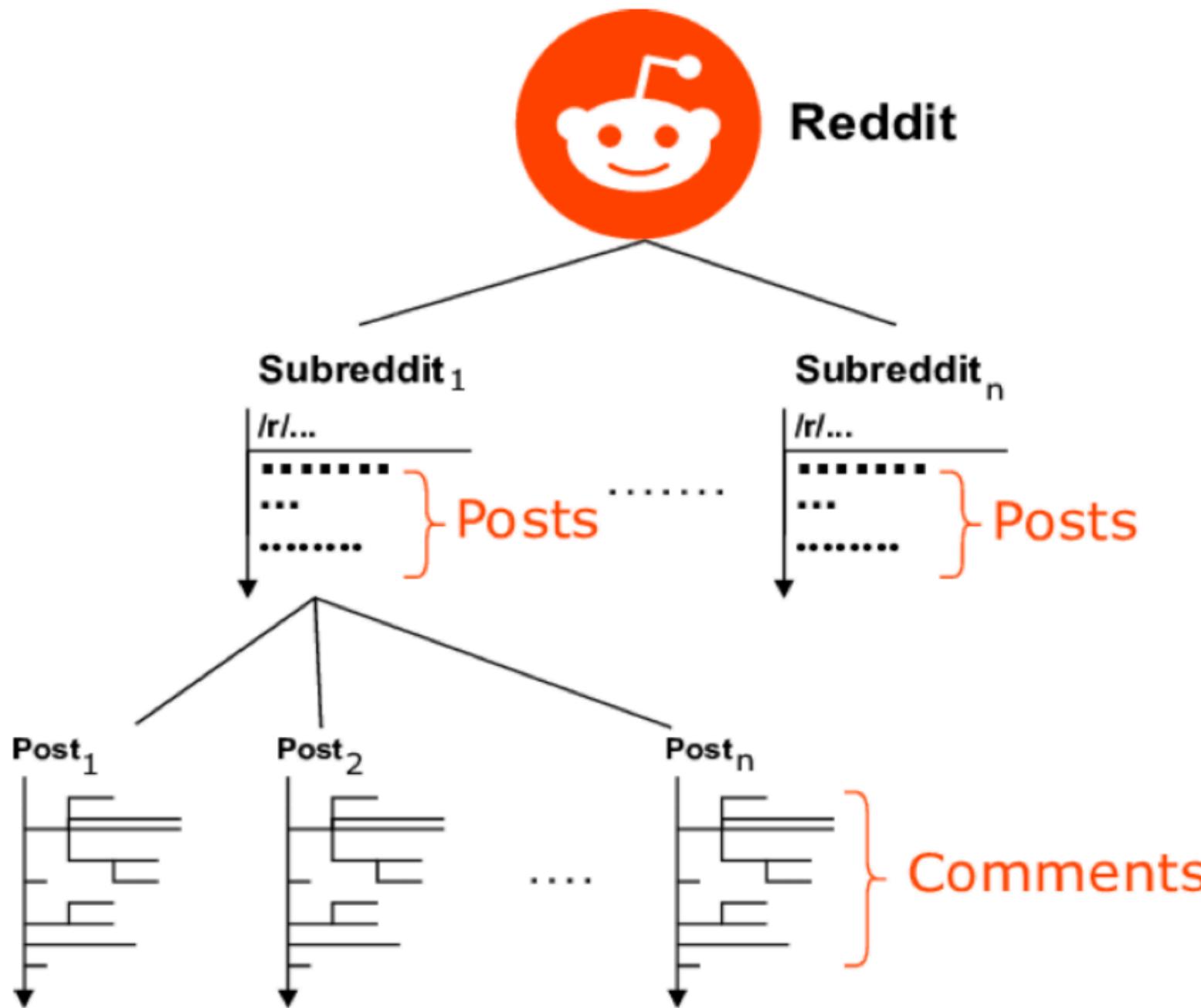
In the **qualitative part**, we conducted **interviews** to enable an in-depth exploration of clinicians' **experiences, interpretations, and practices** surrounding the use of incretin-receptor agonists (Rowley, 2012).

Data Collection

Temporal Analysis

Semantic Analysis

# Reddit's structure



r/glp1

Posts Communities Comments Media People

Safe Search ↻

**r/antidietglp1**  
This is a space for folx using GLP-1 medication who are also anti-diet culture and pro-body liberation.  
13K members · 5 online

**r/GLP1\_BeforeAfter**  
GLP-1 journeys: Before & After transformations, steady progress updates, and real talk. Share photos, Ozempic, Zepbound, and beyond  
592 members · 6 online

**r/Ozempic** · 1d ago  
Aggressive-Iron353

### Ozempic Nightmare. My Story

Rant

I ended up being diagnosed with type 1.5 diabetes at 31. Long story short, I was put on ozempic and almost instantly had issues. Massive weight loss 160 to 115lbs eventually, vision loss resulting to cataract surgery at age 32, massive chest pains along with constant vomiting and gastro issues. No solid stools, and constant back and forth to bathroom after eating. Chest pains and vomiting only helped by hot showers and drinking copious amounts of water that never stayed down. 10+ hospital visits along with Mayo clinic... Be careful taking this....

0 9 Share

Add your reply

Sort by: New (Default) Search Comments

CamdenTown2025 · 1d ago

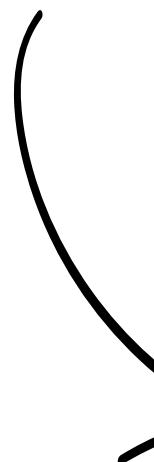
Pero si luego comes alitas para desayunar con una salsa,no es lo más lógico echarle la culpa al Ozempic. Que oye,a mí me está causando muchísimos problemas,eh?,gases,inflamacion...Un horror. Pero tengo que reconocer que si como con una dieta como debe ser,no fritos,no salsas...Pues eso se relaja muchísimo.

1 Reply Award Share ...

# Data collection

## Purpose

Building a dataset of discussions about Ozempic, Wegovy, Mounjaro, Rybelsus & Trulicity from **Reddit**, grouped by year and drugs.



## Final structure

Post Title	Score	Tag	Year	Subreddit	Comments	Engagement	Text
Just started with Ozempic	2,847	Discussion	2024	r/Ozempic	156	94.2%	<a href="#">Started with...</a>

## Steps

### Reddit Post Scraping

Scraped more **10+ subreddits** based on **relevance**.

### Data Cleaning

Cleaned data keeping only important information.

### Data Processing

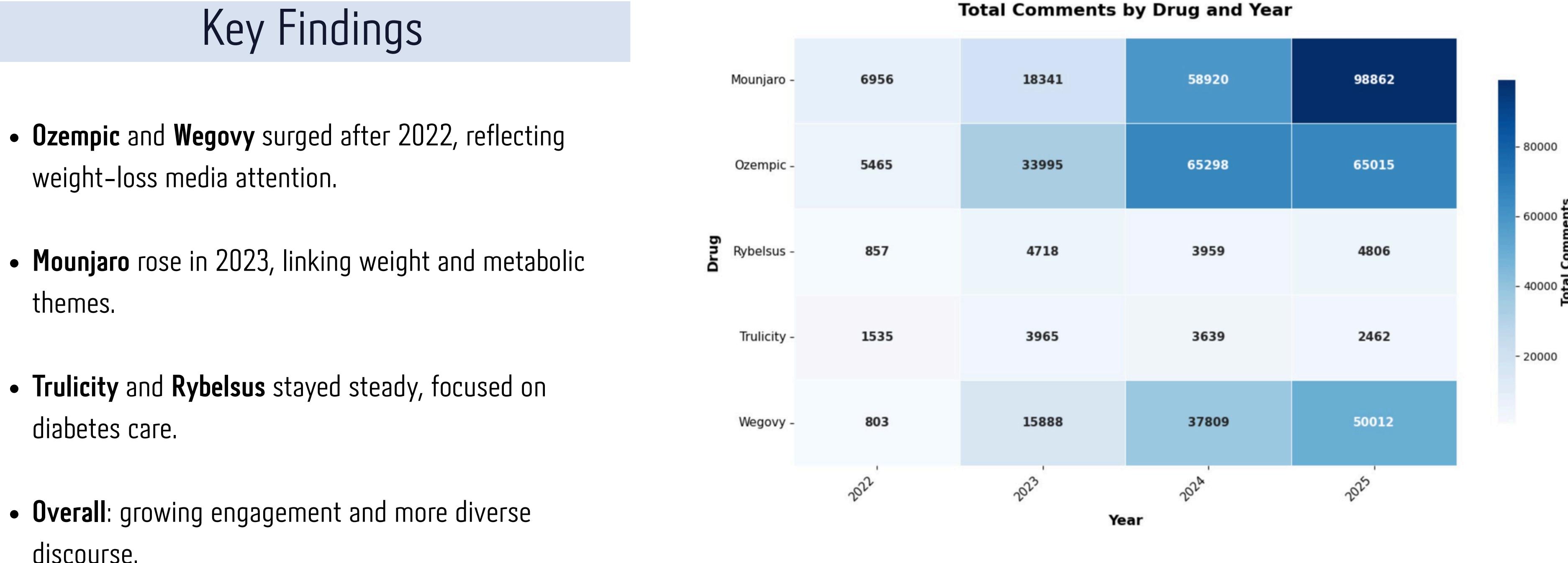
Grouped data by year **(2022-2025)** and **added features**.

### Final Result

5 different datasets, one each drug, with in total **400k+** samples.

# Figure 1: Temporal Analysis

Grouped total number of comments per year and per term

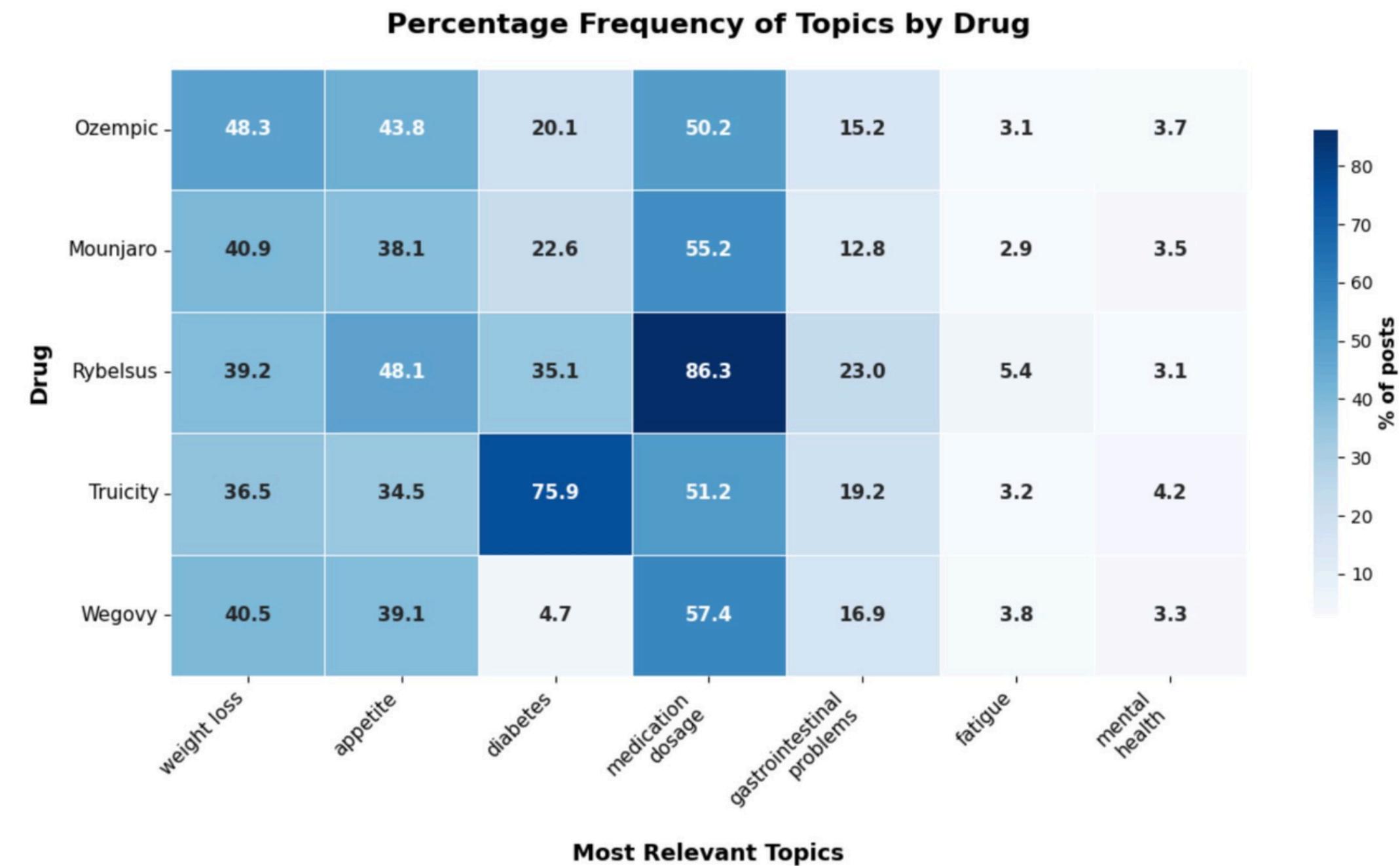


# Figure 2: Semantic Analysis

## With BERTopic

### Key Findings

- **Five main topics:** weight loss, diabetes, dosage, side effects and appetite.
- **Ozempic & Wegovy:** weight loss related language dominant.
- **Trulicity & Rybelsus:** focused on glycemic control.
- **Mounjaro:** hybrid between medical and lifestyle framing.



# Qualitative part: Methods

For the qualitative part, we conducted interviews because they enable an in-depth exploration of clinicians' experiences, interpretations, and practices surrounding the use of incretin-receptor agonists (Rowley, 2012).

## Sampling

Purposive and convenience sampling, participants recruited through our network.

## Interviews

Four semi-structured interviews, conducted remotely.

## Inclusion criteria

Italian healthcare professionals currently working with patients using incretin- receptor agonists.

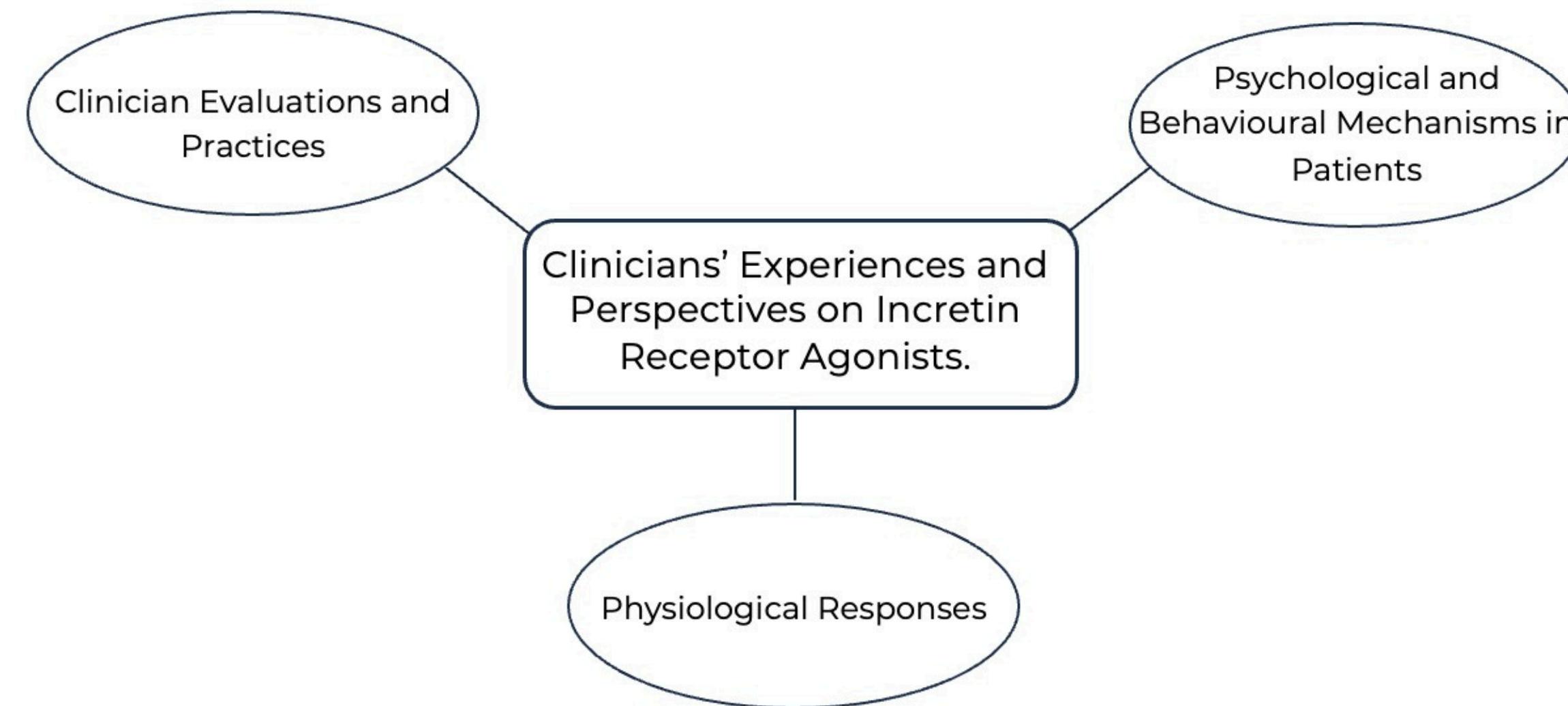
## Method of analysis

Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analysed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis.

# Qualitative part: Findings

The analysis identified three themes that capture how clinicians perceive and experience the growing use of incretin-receptor agonists.

## THEMES EMERGED FROM THEMATIC ANALYSIS

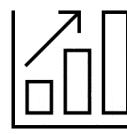


# Clinician evaluation and practices



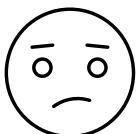
**Increase in  
prescription**

"In the last year I've observed many more patients who came because they're on a GLP-1 therapy."



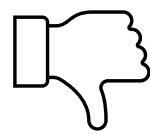
**Highly  
effective**

"It's wonderful... after so long we finally have something that truly works"



**Uncertainty**

"We don't know what happens after ten years, but right now the benefits outweigh the fears."



**Improper use**

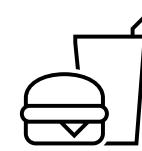
"I've got these crazy pregnant women who, since they gain weight during pregnancy, decide to do it while they're pregnant."



**Education**

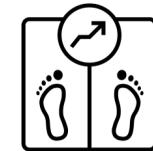
"The patient must be educated to eat well because that hunger masked by GLP-1 doesn't disappear. When therapy ends, it comes back. That's why people regain weight."

# Psychological and behavioural mechanisms in patients



## Control of hunger

"It's a wonderful drug because [...] [for the patient] food is an anxiolytic; eating calms them down."  
"The drug makes them lose weight without feeling hungry... they no longer nibble all the time and can't finish the same portion as before."



## Fear

"They're happy because they don't feel that hunger anymore, but scared that once they stop, the weight and hunger will return."



## Economic and temporal factors

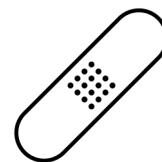
"It gives them the motivation to keep going, partly because of the financial commitment involved..."  
"What definitely gives them the push to keep going and continue is the idea of making the most of a limited window of time, they know they only have a few months to give their best. With a diet, instead, they can always give up and try again later."

# Physiological responses



## Benefits

"Weight loss means pressure drops, the liver is no longer fatty, one can move more easily, even mental health benefits appear"



## Side effects

"Typical side effects include nausea, vomiting, and diarrhoea... in older patients, loss of muscle mass."



## Individual variability

"They're all women in menopause... they feel better, move better, less joint pain."  
"Younger patients start exercising and learn how to maintain a certain weight."

# Discussion

- We generated a dataset containing > 400.000 Reddit discussions and noticed an increase in the number of threads featuring certain medicinal products (Ozempic, Wegovy and Mounjaro), whereas others remained constant (Trulicity and Rybelsus).
- We saw a correlation between drugs and topics of discussion, not necessarily matching the therapeutic indications (e.g. 50% of the posts about Ozempic feature the weight loss topic and only 20% feature the diabetes topic, although Ozempic is indicated for type 2 diabetes)
- Interviews with unbiased italian clinicians revealed outstanding effectiveness from a clinical point of view, which is however accompanied by doubts and uncertainties about the post-treatment phase and patient requests to the clinicians that could result from misleading and incomplete information shared on social media



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Thank you