

# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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## Celebrity Influence on Public Health: The Kardashians and Melanoma

### Dear Editor:

On May 25, 2023, Season 3 of *The Kardashians* premiered, announcing Khloé Kardashian's melanoma diagnosis and highlighting her postoperative course. Melanoma incidence has steadily increased for several decades and carries the highest mortality rate per case of all skin cancers.<sup>1</sup> Melanoma upstaging confers over a 3-fold increase in mortality risk, underscoring the critical importance of public health awareness, early detection, and screening efforts.<sup>2</sup>

Wikipedia pageviews and Google Trends data were evaluated during the 2-week periods before and after the release of *The Kardashians* Season 3 to assess whether publicization of Khloé Kardashian's melanoma diagnosis was associated with increased interest in skin cancer.<sup>3,4</sup>

Wikipedia pageviews for "Khloé Kardashian," and "melanoma," each rose sharply within 1 day of the episode release date and remained substantially elevated for 3 to 7 days, while "sunscreen" pageviews remained low throughout the study period (Figure 1).

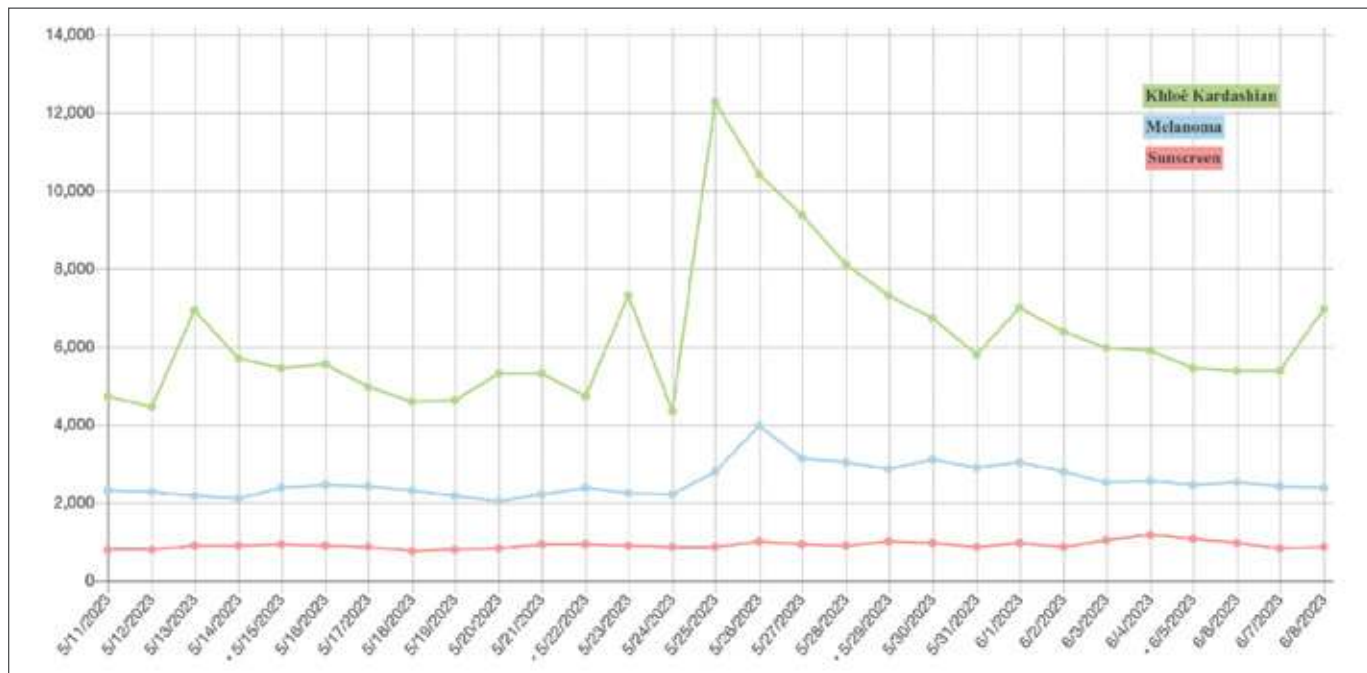
Similarly, Google searches for "Khloé Kardashian" and "melanoma" peaked 1 day after the release (Figure 2). Google Trends settings were selected as web searches in all categories in the United States. In contrast to Wikipedia pageviews, Google searches for "sunscreen" peaked 2 days later, although exhibiting greater variability over time.

Other search terms including "skin cancer check," "skin cancer screening," "skin cancer prevention," "dermatologist near me," "skin check," and "full body skin exam" remained at a relative interest score of 0, indicating no measurable increase. Likewise, "sunblock" and "spf" remained constant at a low search volume index. Google search and Wikipedia data from 2022 and 2024 did not reveal a similar concurrent spike in "melanoma" or "Khloé Kardashian," suggesting compounding seasonal or annual factors were noncontributory.

Limitations include the relative nature of Google Trends data, whereas Wikipedia pageviews represent absolute counts. While correlation cannot confirm causation, these findings, along with previous celebrity health disclosures demonstrate how celebrity disclosures amplify public attention to health topics. It

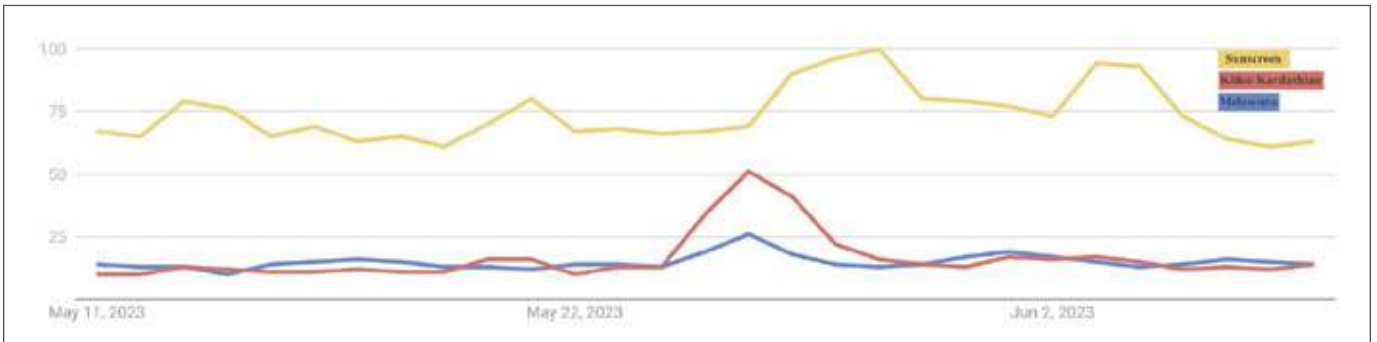
is unclear whether these search results are amplified by advertising of *The Kardashians* or timely public health efforts in response to smaller scale efforts by skin cancer organizations.

These findings highlight a strategic opportunity to deliver impactful public health education during periods of heightened public interest. Although searches for "melanoma" and "Khloé Kardashian" increased following her diagnosis announcement, there was no corresponding spike in "sunscreen" or "sunblock," or various other skin cancer screening searches, suggesting a missed opportunity for prevention-focused public health messaging. Physicians, medical societies, and advocacy groups can leverage these moments to deliver prevention-focused education. Beyond disseminating information, such efforts contribute to the normalization of skin cancer screenings and skin cancer diagnoses. Additionally, the prolonged screentime of the postoperative period, dressings, and scar therapies on the show normalizes treatment experiences for the general public. Physician participation is essential not only for guiding accurate representation but also for fostering informed dialogue, providing medically accurate information, and encouraging behavior change during these critical windows of attention.



**FIGURE 1.** Daily total number of Wikipedia pageviews over time. Pageviews for "Khloé Kardashian" and "melanoma" increased following the public announcement of her melanoma diagnosis on May 25, 2023, while pageviews for "sunscreen" remained stable.

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**FIGURE 2.** Google Trends search volumes for each term are shown with relative interest scaled from 0 to 100 over time. Searches for “Khloé Kardashian” and “melanoma” peaked on May 25, 2023, coinciding with the public announcement of her melanoma diagnosis. Searches for “sunscreens” increased 2 days later, reaching the highest relative volume (100) for that term, though exhibiting greater variability over time.

With regard,  
**MOJAN DERISS, PA-C;**  
**CYBIL SIERRA STINGL, MD;**  
and **NOUR KIBBI, MD**

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**AFFILIATIONS:** *Ms. Deriss is a medical student with Roseman University College of Medicine, Las Vegas, Nevada. Dr. Stingl is with the Division of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery, Department of Surgery, Stanford School of Medicine, Stanford, California. Dr. Kibbi is with the Department of Dermatology, Department of Medicine, Stanford School of Medicine, Stanford, California.*

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**CORRESPONDENCE:** Mojan Deriss, PA-C;  
Email: [mojan.deriss@gmail.com](mailto:mojan.deriss@gmail.com)

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