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Almost 95% of viral Korean skincare and ‘glass skin’ TikTok videos contain misleading claims, new study shows

(Vienna, Austria, Wednesday, 30 September 2026) Almost 95% of viral Korean skincare and ‘glass skin’ TikTok videos contained at least one potentially misleading claim, while basic safety information was largely absent, according to new research presented today at the European Academy of Dermatology and Venereology (EADV) Congress 2026.¹

Korean skincare and the pursuit of ‘glass skin’ – a popular term for clear, smooth and deeply hydrated skin – have become global social media phenomena, particularly on TikTok, where routines can reach millions of users. However, the dermatological accuracy and safety of this content have not been extensively evaluated.

In one of the first studies of its kind, researchers analysed videos related to popular Korean skincare and ‘glass skin’ routines in May 2026. Using a neutral account with no prior engagement history to minimise algorithmic bias, the researchers screened the top videos across five Korean skincare-related search terms. After exclusions, 38 videos were assessed for dermatological claims, safety information, quality and reliability using the Global Quality Scale and modified DISCERN.

Almost 95% of the videos contained at least one misleading claim, while 84% failed to account for different skin types, 45% promoted excessive combinations of active ingredients without appropriate safety guidance and 32% promised instant results.

“What surprised us most was how consistently basic safety information was absent,” noted lead author Dr Maria Lúcia Paysano. “Only one of the 38 videos mentioned irritation risk, only two addressed sun protection, none mentioned contact dermatitis risk and none recommended consulting a dermatologist.”

All videos were classified as unreliable or less reliable, while none cited an external source or reference. Nearly 82% were created by non-physician influencers, 11% by beauty brands and 8% by other beauty content creators; none were produced by dermatologists.

“Our findings show a clear gap between the popularity of this content and the quality of the information provided,” said Dr Paysano. “Following these routines without individualised guidance may contribute to irritation, over-exfoliation, acne flares or skin barrier disruption, particularly when multiple active ingredients are combined.”

The potential real-world consequences of following viral skincare trends were highlighted in a separate observational study presented at the EADV Congress 2026. The study involved 94 patients who developed a new or aggravated skin

condition following the use of cosmetic or dermatological products promoted on social media.²

Chemical exfoliants containing alpha-hydroxy acids (AHAs) or beta-hydroxy acids (BHAs) were the most frequently implicated products, reported in 34% of cases, followed by over-the-counter retinoids (27%), vitamin C serums (14%) and niacinamide-containing products (11%).

Almost half (48%) of patients had adopted complete skincare routines directly inspired by social media content, while 63% were simultaneously using more than three active skincare ingredients.

“What was particularly striking was not simply the popularity of these products, but the way they were being used,” commented lead author Dr Ouissal Hormi. “Many patients were reproducing complex skincare routines involving several active ingredients simultaneously, often based on advice from non-medical influencers.”

Reactions ranged from irritant contact dermatitis (42%) and acne onset or significant worsening (28%) to rosacea flares or rosacea-like dermatitis (12%), post-inflammatory hyperpigmentation (11%) and superficial chemical burns (7%).

“Combining several active ingredients can place excessive stress on the skin barrier since some have overlapping irritant effects,” said Dr Hormi. “Our message is simple: ‘Viral’ does not necessarily mean safe, validated or suitable for everyone.”

The researchers stressed that Korean skincare itself is not the problem. Rather, the concern is that skincare principles such as gentle cleansing, hydration and barrier care can be transformed on social media into viral, one-size-fits-all routines without appropriate safety information.

“Consumers should be cautious of content promising instant or universal results,” added Dr Paysano. “Anyone with an existing skin condition who develops irritation or is unsure whether a routine is appropriate for them should seek advice from a dermatologist.”

“Dermatologists also have an important role to play. Rather than dismissing social media trends, we have the opportunity to participate in these conversations and make evidence-based skincare information accurate, accessible and engaging.”

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Note to editors:

A reference to the EADV Congress 2026 must be included in all coverage and/or articles associated with this study.

For more information or to arrange an expert interview, please contact press@eadv.org.

About the study authors:

Dr Maria Lúcia Paysano is a dermatology resident at the Instituto de Dermatologia Prof Rubem David Azulay, Santa Casa da Misericórdia do Rio de Janeiro, Brazil and a graduate of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ) School of Medicine. Her research on treatment safety, imaging of aesthetic complications and the quality of skincare content circulating online has been presented at international meetings, including the EADV Congress and the American Academy of Dermatology Annual Meeting, and was recognised with the IMCAS Next Gen Award.

Dr Ouissal Hormi is a dermatology resident at the Department of Dermatology, Venereology and Allergology, Mohammed VI University Hospital in Oujda, Morocco. She is affiliated with the Faculty of Medicine and Pharmacy, Mohammed First University, Oujda. Her clinical and research interests include inflammatory dermatoses, paediatric dermatology, allergology and the influence of social media on dermatological health, patient behaviour and medical practice.

About EADV:

Founded in 1987, EADV is a non-profit organisation with a vision to form a premier European Dermatology-Venereology Society. The Academy counts over 12,000 members from all around the globe, providing a valuable service for every type of dermatologist-venereologist professional. The EADV is dedicated to advancing patient care, education and research by providing a unique platform to bring people together and share ideas.

This year, the EADV Congress will take place in Vienna, Austria, and online from 30 September - 3 October 2026. Find out more: <https://eadv.org/congress/>

References:

1. Paysano, M. L., Talah, B. A. D., Elias, M. C., & Kreuz, M. (2026, September 30–October 3). *Glass Skin or Barrier Breakdown? Evaluating the Quality and Safety of Viral Korean Skincare Routines on TikTok*. EADV Congress 2026, Vienna, Austria.
2. Hormi, O., El yamani, L., Moujahid, S., Denna, S., Zerrouki, N., & Zizi, N. (2026, September 30–October 3). *When skincare trends go wrong: Dermatologic complications of viral social media products*. EADV Congress 2026, Vienna, Austria.