

LETTER TO EDITOR

Do Celebrities Want to be Treated Differently in Health System? Using Fame in a Controversial Way

Vahid Yazdi-Feyzabadi¹, Fatemeh Shaygani², Sajad Delavari^{3*}

¹ Health Services Management Research Center, Institute for Futures Studies in Health, Kerman University of Medical Sciences, Kerman, Iran

² Student Research Committee, Shiraz University of Medical Sciences, Shiraz, Iran

³ Health Human Resources Research Center, School of Health Management and Information Sciences, Shiraz University of Medical Sciences, Shiraz, Iran

Recently, there has been news about not providing diagnostic services to an Instagram influencer who is active in the field of food blogging (testing and rating the food of different restaurants) in Iran. The event happened that the influencer suspected of having a brain injury went to one of the public hospitals of Shiraz University of Medical Sciences on June 6, 2022. After triage and tiering, he was told that he requires hospitalization and a visit by a doctor to receive medical services and get a CT scan. The only problem in the diagnostic process was that the equipment in that hospital could not provide services to people over 100 kilograms.

Usually, overweight people were guided and referred to other centers with special scanners. This issue was informed to him, who weighed 114 kilograms.

Then, relying on his well-known status, the patient started protesting and using obscenities at the hospital staff and refused to be hospitalized. Then, by filming the staff (Figure 1a) and broadcasting it on his Instagram page, which had 2 millions followers (Figure 1b), with the sacrifice of showing himself, he tried to worry the public about this staff who only follows the guidelines (Figure 1c) (1).

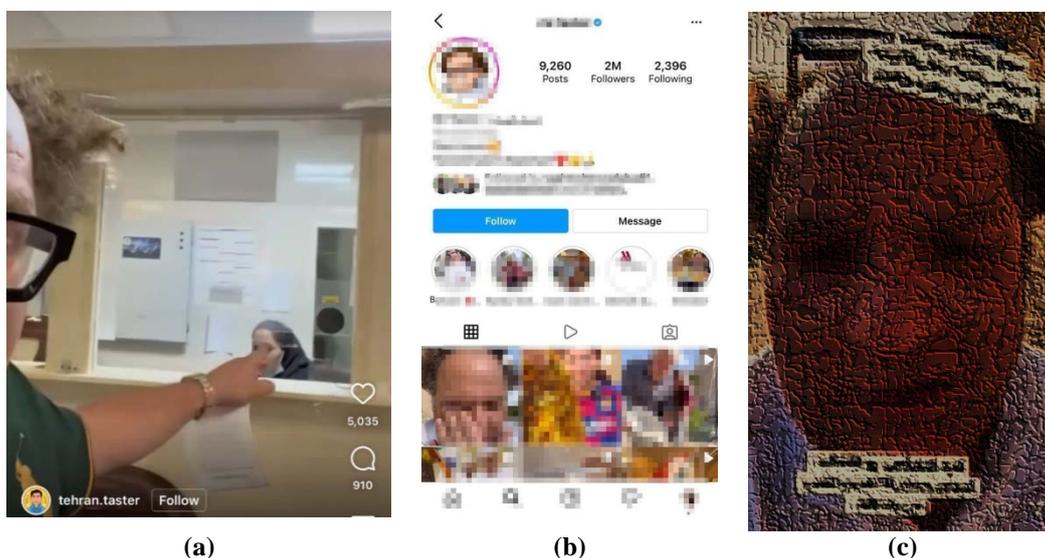


Figure 1. A schematic of page information and reactions of the influencer Instagram to the health care staff of a university hospital

Corresponding Author: Sajad Delavari
Email: sajadd@gmail.com
Tel: +98 917 302 9489

Health Human Resources Research Center,
School of Health Management and Information
Sciences, Shiraz University of Medical Sciences,
Shiraz, Iran

Copyright: ©2023 The Author(s); Published by ShahidSadoughi University of Medical Sciences. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

Considering the important role of influencers and celebrities in impacting the public mind (2, 3), the public relations office of the University of Medical Sciences explained the current situation in a statement to give accurate and clear information to the people following this person regarding the above current situation. To support the committed medical staff who try to provide services to patients without discrimination (1).

He considers the destruction of the health care staff, who have proven their dedication and courage with their two-year efforts in the difficult conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic, to be an unfair move. It causes people to mistrust this hard-working staff, and there may be unfortunate consequences for people's health.

One of the remarkable points in this real story is the existence of rationing in health systems, which is a logical approach to providing health services due to the limitations and lack of resources that all health systems face (4). The presence of scanners that are used for weights over 100 kilograms maybe not cost-effective in all hospitals, and in a city or province, only one or two hospitals can cover the real needs of that area.

However, in this case, the influencer only thinks about the services he needs, and from his point of view, there is no justification for a hospital not having the facilities he needs (1). He explained this issue differently and influenced public opinion about hospital services. Like it or not, nowadays, influencers have many followers in virtual networks, and their behavior and words, according to the social learning theory, affect the behavior and attitude of many people in society.

Influencers' attractions and social marketing techniques have caused their role in social interactions and policies to become more prominent daily (5-7). They often direct public opinion on social, economic, and cultural issues. Also, their awareness, attitude, and performance regarding various topics can affect their followers (7). They often do not know much about specialized topics and seek to identify

controversial and attractive topics to attract more audiences (8).

Although many studies have been conducted on the behavior and effects of these groups, their behavior still needs more investigation and study (5). Based on this real story, it became clear that the health system is not without the effects of influencers and must think of ways to use and exploit their role positively. A role that can promote health if it is actively implemented (9). In this matter, Shiraz University of Medical Sciences plays a passive role. After the news controversy, it provides a statement and answers to the public opinion to clear the doubts in this field.

However, if this role is active, and the influencers are aware and informed about health system issues, their positive role can be used in public information and informing society about health issues and health system services (2, 9). Raising the awareness of influencers and establishing appropriate and active communication with them can effectively increase public awareness about various health system issues, including access to services. They can play a facilitating role in the education sector of the health system (5, 6, 9-11).

Such a good experience was also seen during the COVID-19 pandemic when most of the actors and well-known figures in the virtual space encouraged people to get the vaccine and motivated people (8, 12). This issue caused Iran's remarkable success in covering the covid vaccination. Therefore, considering the increasing role of influencers in the health system and the positive and negative effects they can have, service providers must take advantage of their positive and constructive role in seeking support (13, 14).

Having a plan and identifying the behavior of influencers clarify the necessity of such research in this field. On the other hand, proactive planning according to the existing knowledge about the behavior of influencers to take advantage of their positive role in promoting health and providing better and more appropriate health services is an

issue that should be considered by all organizations providing health services at all levels.

Key word: Celebrity effect, health services, health system, rationing

References

1. The scandalous story of "Mr. Tester" in Shiraz; From the answer of the University of Medical Sciences to the problems of CT scan for the obese: KhabarOnline; 2022 [cited 2023 2023/06/17]. Available from URL: <https://khabaronline.ir/xhWwH>.
2. Caraher M, Lange T, Dixon P. The Influence of TV and Celebrity Chefs on Public Attitudes and Behavior Among the English Public. *Journal for the Study of Food and Society*. 2000;4(1):27-46.
3. Ransohoff DF, Ransohoff RM. Sensationalism in the media: when scientists and journalists may be complicit collaborators. *Effective clinical practice : ECP*. 2001;4(4):185-8.
4. Norheim OF. Healthcare rationing-are additional criteria needed for assessing evidence based clinical practice guidelines? *BMJ (Clinical research ed)*. 1999;319(7222):1426-9.
5. Grilli R, Ramsay C, Minozzi S. Mass media interventions: effects on health services utilisation. *The Cochrane database of systematic reviews*. 2002(1):Cd000389.
6. Hoffman SJ, Tan C. Biological, psychological and social processes that explain celebrities' influence on patients' health-related behaviors. *Archives of public health = Archives belges de sante publique*. 2015;73(1):3.
7. Sabel MS, Dal Cin S. Trends in Media Reports of Celebrities' Breast Cancer Treatment Decisions. *Annals of surgical oncology*. 2016;23(9):2795-801.
8. Wei J, Zhao M, Meng F, Chen J, Xu Y. Influence of Internet Celebrity Medical Experts on COVID-19 Vaccination Intention of Young Adults: An Empirical Study From China. *Frontiers in public health*. 2022;10:887913.
9. Biancovilli P, Makszin L, Amer F, Csongor A. Celebrities and Breast Cancer: A Multidimensional Qualitative Analysis of News Stories Shared on Social Media. *International journal of environmental research and public health*. 2022;19(15).
10. Dixon H, Scully M, Niven P, Kelly B, Chapman K, Donovan R, et al. Effects of nutrient content claims, sports celebrity endorsements and premium offers on pre-adolescent children's food preferences: experimental research. *Pediatric obesity*. 2014;9(2):e47-e57.
11. Larson RJ, Woloshin S, Schwartz LM, Welch HG. Celebrity endorsements of cancer screening. *Journal of the National Cancer Institute*. 2005;97(9):693-5.
12. Khan A, Sabir RI, Majid MB, Javaid MU, Anwar Ul Haq M, Mehmood H. Celebrity endorsements, whitening products, and consumer purchase intentions: A review of literature. *Journal of cosmetic dermatology*. 2022;21(10):4194-204.
13. Wakefield MA, Loken B, Hornik RC. Use of mass media campaigns to change health behaviour. *Lancet (London, England)*. 2010;376(9748):1261-71.
14. Nguyen Long LA, Foster M, Arnold G. The impact of stakeholder engagement on local policy decision making. *Policy Sciences*. 2019;52(4):549-71.