

The impact of celebrities disclosing skin cancer: the example of Gordon Ramsay

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Abstract

Introduction: Celebrity disclosures of health conditions can influence public awareness and searches for health information. On August 30th, 2025, Gordon Ramsay announced on Instagram (> 19 million followers) that he had undergone surgery for basal cell carcinoma (BCC). This study evaluates the impact of this announcement on online search behavior.

Methods: Google Trends data were analyzed for the terms “Gordon Ramsay,” “basal cell carcinoma,” “skin cancer,” “photoprotection,” and “sunscreen” worldwide and in the United Kingdom from August 2023 to September 2025. Wikimedia Pageviews Analysis was used to assess daily visits to the BCC article in multiple languages.

Results: Ramsay’s announcement generated a marked but transient surge in searches for “basal cell carcinoma,” with an associated 1,800% increase in combined queries and a 218% rise in daily Wikipedia pageviews. The effect was most prominent in English-speaking countries and briefly in the Czech Republic following local media coverage. No increase was observed for prevention-related terms. Comparisons with other celebrities show that Ramsay had the highest impact over the past 9 years.

Conclusions: Celebrity health announcements can trigger immediate spikes in public information seeking, but the effect is brief and geographically limited. However, heightened awareness may not necessarily lead to sustained engagement or preventive behavior.

Keywords: celebrity, infodemiology, skin cancer, social media, prevention

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Introduction

At a time when public figures wield considerable influence, celebrities’ decisions to disclose their health problems can have various social impacts. Be it a diagnosis of cancer, mental health issues, or chronic illness, these revelations often go beyond the tabloid press to spark public debate, reduce stigma, and encourage prevention or medical treatment. Examples include Angelina Jolie for preventive mastectomy (1), Kylie Minogue for breast cancer (2), and Charlie Sheen for HIV (3). Social media currently play a major role in directly reaching followers. The Australian actor Hugh Jackman has been using Instagram for years to raise awareness about basal cell carcinoma (BCC) and the importance of sun protection (4). However, the impact may vary by celebrity (5).

On August 30th, 2025, the Scottish chef and restaurateur Gordon Ramsay (born in 1966) posted two pictures on his Instagram profile (> 19 million followers) showing the scar of a preauricular BCC that had been surgically removed. He also reminded his followers of the importance of sun protection (Figs. 1A and 1B). Twenty-four hours later, this post featured over 5,600 comments. This study used this announcement to track the impact of this news on searches for information about BCC using the infodemiology tool Google Trends (GT). The number of visits to the Wikipedia page dedicated to BCC was reviewed, and the effect of this announcement was compared to those of other celebrities with BCC. In addition, the study evaluated the duration of the effect over time and, in particular, the time it took for the effect to disappear.

Methods

GT provides data on the relative search volume (RSV) of queries

and topics over time and across geographical areas. GT-generated data for RSVs of the following terms were analyzed: “Gordon Ramsay,” “basal cell carcinoma” (“BCC”), “skin cancer,” “photoprotection,” and “sunscreen.” Analysis was performed both worldwide and in the United Kingdom (UK) over a maximum 24-month period (from August 27th, 2023, to September 28th, 2025). The results are displayed as a set of time series. The values are not the actual search counts but percentages relative to the total searches across the specified geography and time. The resulting numbers are scaled from 0 to 100 based on the proportion to all searches on all topics. Raw data were collected in an Excel file (Microsoft, Redmond, Washington, USA) as weekly RSVs. All data used in this study are publicly available and anonymous, and they cannot be traced back to identifiable individuals. The study did not require ethical approval from an institutional review board.

The study used Pageviews Analysis (<https://pageviews.wmcloud.org>), a web-based analytics tool for Wikimedia projects. This tool makes it possible to explore metrics such as daily or monthly pageviews back to July 2015 (6). Daily pageviews of the Wikipedia article on BCC between July 27th, 2025, and September 28th, 2025, were analyzed in multiple languages (English, Czech, and French). In addition, they were compared to the pageviews recorded after various celebrities’ announcements.

Results

The search trends for “Gordon Ramsay” and “BCC” worldwide and in the UK over the past 2 years are summarized in Fig. 2. The announcement of the BCC surgery is in sixth and seventh place in terms of search volume for “Gordon Ramsay” for the past 2 years in the UK and worldwide, respectively. Two higher peaks can be

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observed between June 16th and 22nd, 2024, and November 12th and 18th, 2023. They are related to two personal events: a bike accident in Connecticut and the birth of Ramsey’s sixth child. Milder peaks in 2023 and 2024 are related to professional events. If the GT search is narrowed to the past 12 months, the announcement of his skin cancer is the second most important event of the past year for the chef. The top five countries that have searched for “Gordon Ramsay” over the past 12 months are the UK, Canada, the United States, Australia, and Ireland.

The highest peak of search for “BCC,” both worldwide (Fig. 2A) and in the UK (Fig. 2B), coincides with Ramsay’s announcement. According to GT, on September 28th the main query associated with “BCC” was “Gordon Ramsay,” with an increase of 1,800% of this combined search. Peaks in the search for “BCC” during this period were also observed in Australia, Canada, and Ireland, but not in the US (data not shown). The search for “skin cancer” for the past 12 months in the UK showed a small peak between August 24th and 30th, 2025 (Fig. 3). A notable peak associated with search terms such as “photoprotection” or “sunscreen” was not found (data not shown).

In the month preceding Ramsey’s announcement, the Wikipedia page on BCC had a mean daily view count of 1,789 ± 227. On August 30th, the page had 5,275 views, totaling a 218% increase

compared to the previous day. The number of views decreased the following day, but it remained over 2,000 over the next 7 days. From September 6th to 28th, 2025, the mean daily view count dropped back to 1,619 ± 348 (Fig. 4). From August 30th to September 6th, the Wikipedia pages dedicated to BCC in any language had been viewed 39,102 times. The English page accounted for 58% of all the views (n = 22,811). The second language was Czech. The analysis then focused on the data regarding the Czech Republic. Pageviews Analysis showed a surge of search for “Bazaliom” on <https://cs.wikipedia.org> on September 5th, with 3,877 views versus 62 the day before, corresponding to an increase of 6,153%. This surge coincides with the publication of an article on a Czech website on the same day about celebrities and BCC, including Gordon Ramsay (7). To compare the magnitude of the announcement’s impact in non-English-speaking countries, France was selected as a representative case. On the French Wikipedia page (<https://fr.wikipedia.org>), the increase of searches for BCC was minimal (+80% from September 29th to 31st). On both the Czech and French pages, surges lasted for 48 hours before returning to the regular baseline view count.

Finally, the study examined whether the impact could differ by celebrity. The past “BCC” pageviews history from January 1st, 2017, to September 28th, 2025, was reviewed. Several peaks



Figure 1 | Screenshots from Ramsay’s Instagram account on September 30th, 2025. The post features two images, the first showing a bandage (1A) and the second the linear surgical scar under the left ear with eight stitches (1B). A short text mentions the diagnosis of basal cell carcinoma and the necessity not to “forget your sunscreen this weekend.”

in views were observed through the years and linked to various public announcements of BCC diagnoses among celebrities by cross-referencing dates of peak search activity with newspaper articles on celebrities published on search platforms and using artificial intelligence-based analytical tools (Fig. 5). The values and celebrities are summarized in Table 1. Ramsay appeared to have triggered the highest number of views ever on Wikipedia for the past 9 years. Hugh Jackman appears very close. Unfortunately, Pageviews Analysis does not provide results before 2015, and so there are no data available on Jackman’s very first announcement in November 2013 (4).

Discussion

Today’s celebrities may disclose their health conditions for various reasons, such as informing the public, fighting the stigma associated with a condition, or promoting screening or treatment

(8, 9). There is no doubt that Ramsay’s announcement on Instagram immediately triggered an increase in searches for “BCC.” These searches mainly came from an English-speaking audience and, unsurprisingly, they were most prominent in his home country. Outside English-speaking regions, the impact was less pronounced, most likely because Ramsay enjoys lower visibility in countries in which his TV shows are not broadcast. The notable increase in views of the Wikipedia article on “Bazaliom” in the Czech Republic is particularly interesting. The local news article mainly discussed several celebrities with skin cancer and BCC. In fact, in terms of the number of mentions, Ramsay was only in third place, after Hugh Jackman and Jane Fonda (7). In this case, Ramsay’s announcement appears to have drawn attention to the broader topic of “celebrities with BCC/skin cancer,” rather than specifically to “Gordon Ramsay with BCC.” Therefore, the study investigated whether the level of a celebrity’s fame could impact

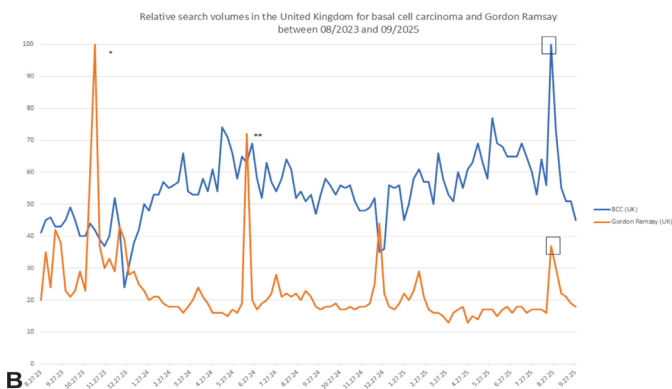
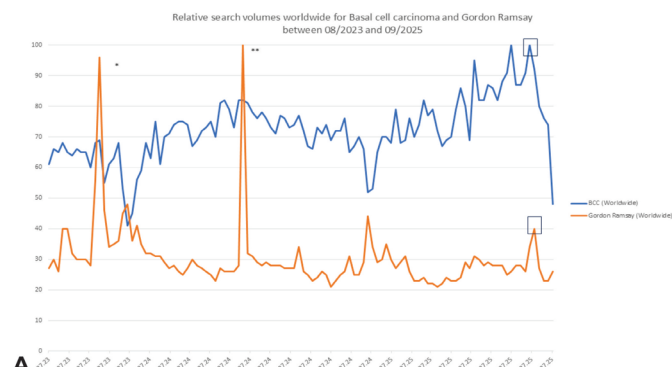


Figure 2 | Relative search volumes for basal cell carcinoma and Gordon Ramsay worldwide (2A) and in the United Kingdom (2B) between August 2023 and September 2025 on Google Trends. A direct comparison between the search volume values of both curves is not possible—only the curves’ trend can be compared; *birth of Ramsay’s sixth child, **bike fall in Connecticut; the squares indicate when Ramsay published the story about his basal cell carcinoma on Instagram.

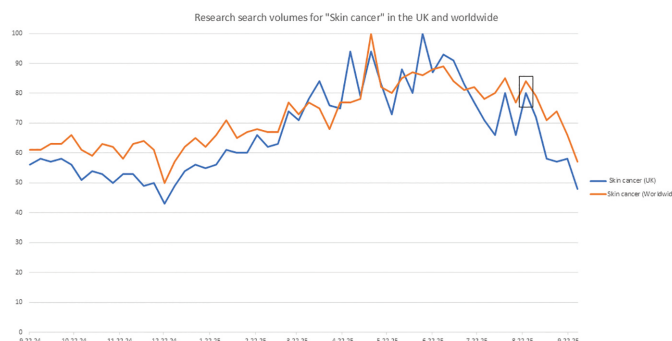


Figure 3 | Research search volumes for skin cancer in the United Kingdom and worldwide for the past 12 months. The black square indicates Ramsay’s announcement.

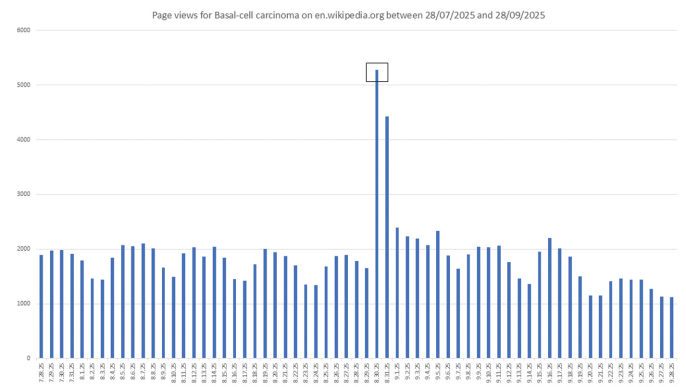


Figure 4 | Daily page views for basal cell carcinoma on <https://en.wikipedia.org> between July 28th, 2025, and September 28th, 2025 (source: <https://pageviews.wmcloud.org>). The square indicates when Ramsay published the story about his basal cell carcinoma on Instagram.

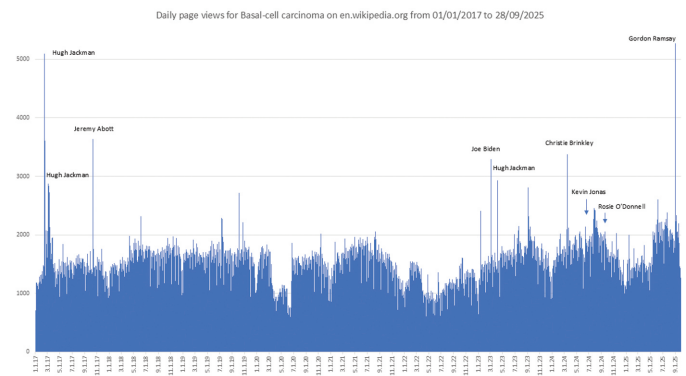


Figure 5 | Daily page views for basal cell carcinoma on <https://en.wikipedia.org> between January 1st, 2017, and September 28th, 2025 (source: <https://pageviews.wmcloud.org>). Several peaks in views match celebrities’ announcements. However, the magnitude of searches varies by celebrity.

Table 1 | Selection of celebrity announcements regarding basal cell carcinoma diagnosis or treatment, and number of views on the English-language Wikipedia page (<en.wikipedia.org>) on basal cell carcinoma on the same or following day (statistics according to pageviews.wmcloud.org).

Celebrity	Date of basal cell carcinoma announcement	Page views
Gordon Ramsay, TV host	Aug. 30th, 2025	5,275
Hugh Jackman, actor	Feb. 14th, 2017	5,098
Jeremy Abbott, ice skater	Oct. 10th, 2017	3,634
Christie Brinkley, actress	Mar. 14th, 2024	3,373
Joe Biden, 46th US president	Mar. 3rd, 2023	3,294
Hugh Jackman	Apr. 4th, 2023	2,934
Hugh Jackman	Mar. 5th, 2017	2,870
Joe Biden	Sept. 5th, 2025	2,335
Kevin Jonas, musician	June 12th, 2024	2,079
Rosie O’Donnell, actress	Sept. 13th, 2024	2,007

the search for information regarding BCC, as has been observed in other diseases, such as pancreatic cancer (10). It was found that Ramsay had the highest impact over the past years. His announcement competes with those by the Australian actor Hugh Jackman. However, this finding requires further discussion. As mentioned above, Jackman has regularly posted about his BCC. His core audience may have become accustomed to such announcements, leading to a decline in search interest, as observed in the results of this study.

Moreover, Pageviews Analysis contains no data for Jackman's first announcement, and it cannot be ruled out that the novelty of that initial disclosure may have generated a stronger impact. This suggests that, even when celebrities repeatedly share updates about the same condition, the public response tends to lose momentum over time and with repetition. This was also the case with former US President Joe Biden. His first diagnosis triggered a higher search than the second one (Table 1). Furthermore, during the announcement of his second cancer, Biden was no longer the president, which is an additional influencing factor.

This study does not make it possible to draw conclusions about the profile or motivation of individuals seeking information about BCC. However, Ramsay is more likely to influence followers that know him or identify with him—for instance, middle-aged men with fair skin phototypes from the British Isles, or their partners, who may encourage them to seek skin cancer screening following his announcement. A similar effect was previously observed after Afro-American actor Chadwick Boseman's death due to colon cancer: a significant increase in online activity related to colon cancer and its screening was observed, particularly in US regions with a higher proportion of African Americans (11).

Gordon Ramsay stressed the importance of sun protection. No impact was observed in terms of prevention. Indeed, there was no notable increase on GT for the terms “photoprotection” or “sunscreen” during the same period. Because Ramsay's announcement coincided with a warm and sunny summer in Europe at the end of August, searches for “sunscreen” or “photoprotection” were likely already high, making any additional variation due to his announcement less noticeable. Moreover, higher peaks in skin cancer-related searches between late spring and early fall (Fig. 3) are well documented (12, 13). These trends may be explained by the onset of summer, increased sun exposure, lighter clothing, and the detection of cutaneous lesions, which become more noticeable. In addition, sunscreen recommendations receive greater

media attention during the summer months. The influence of skin cancer awareness campaigns in May has also been suggested (14).

Finally, it would also be interesting to see whether a more dramatic and encouraging message would have had a greater impact than the light and humorous tone of his message “don't forget your sunscreen this weekend.”

The limitations of this study are well recognized. It relied on indirect infodemiology tools and selected specific keywords for the analysis. Individuals may have used other search terms or sought information through different channels. No data are available on the profile or motivations of those performing the searches, which could range from curiosity to morbid voyeurism. Prior personal events affecting Ramsay—such as his potentially serious bicycle accident the previous year—also appear to have prompted increased searches.

It is important to note that searching for information about a condition like BCC does not necessarily translate into preventive behavior, such as undergoing skin cancer screening or increasing sunscreen use. Ramsay is not the first celebrity to discuss BCC, a condition that generally has an excellent prognosis. Consequently, the audience may become accustomed to such announcements, leading to diminishing interest over time. Only dedicated studies, particularly in the UK, could evaluate whether his announcements result in actual surges in clinical consultations.

Conclusions

Overall, the impact of celebrity health announcements appears to be transient. Their influence is likely modulated by several factors, including the celebrity's level of fame, public visibility, the nature and severity of the diagnosis, and the presence of disfiguring consequences. Even though such disclosures may benefit certain individuals—particularly those that identify with a similar risk profile—they are unlikely, on their own, to drive a substantial increase in dermatology consultations for BCC at the population level. These events nonetheless generate significant public attention, as reflected by increased online search activity, and may be leveraged by medical influencers and professional dermatological societies to amplify prevention messages. Whether this heightened awareness extends beyond initial curiosity to result in sustained behavioral change or increased clinical engagement remains uncertain and warrants further investigation.

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