

Letter

POTUS' Neck Rash: Impact on Public Skin Cancer Awareness

Nicolas Kluger^{1,2,3}

¹ Aava Medical Center, Kauppakaari 15, 04200 Kerava, Finland; nicolaskluger@yahoo.fr

² Department of Dermatology, Tampere University Hospital, 33520 Tampere, Finland

³ Société Française des Sciences Humaines sur la Peau (SFSHP), Maison de la Dermatologie, 75009 Paris, France

How To Cite: Kluger, N. POTUS' Neck Rash: Impact on Public Skin Cancer Awareness. *Dermatology and Skin Science* 2026, 1(2), 7. <https://doi.org/10.53941/dss.2026.100007>

Received: 21 July 2026

Revised: 17 August 2026

Accepted: 28 August 2026

Published: 31 August 2026

Abstract: Media attention on a visible neck rash on US President Donald Trump, first noted 2 March 2026, at a White House ceremony, prompted dermatologists to speculate that the rash resulted from topical treatment for actinic keratosis (AK), though no official diagnosis was confirmed, as the White House physician only cited a “preventative skin treatment”. Google Trends and Wikipedia pageview data for related search terms (AK, imiquimod, fluorouracil, photodynamic therapy, rash, skin cancer) from January–April 2026 showed sharp, short-lived spikes in searches and Wikipedia visits for “fluorouracil”, “imiquimod”, and “AK” around 3 March and 18 March 2026 (increases of 126–321% in pageviews), while interest in “cryotherapy”, “cryosurgery”, “photodynamic therapy”, “skin cancer”, and “rash” showed minimal change. Public interest returned to baseline within 4–5 days. This pattern reflects a transient “celebrity effect” on health information-seeking, likely limited by the absence of formal diagnostic confirmation. The episode is situated within a history of US presidential skin cancers (Reagan, Biden, Carter...) and raises ethical questions about medical confidentiality versus public speculation in dermatology, drawing a parallel to the psychiatric “Goldwater rule”, while noting confirmed diagnoses could meaningfully boost public awareness.

Keywords: actinic keratosis; famous persons; fluorouracil; imiquimod; infodemiology; photodynamic therapy; politics; skin cancer

Dear Editor,

The health of world leaders is a legitimate public concern, as physical illness may impair their ability to govern, force them to withdraw prematurely from political life, or even lead to unexpected death and political instability.

Politicians may postpone the management of their condition because of political agenda, as when Quebec Premier Robert Bourassa (1933–1996) delayed the removal of his melanoma in 1990 [1]; they may conceal their illnesses, as US President Lyndon B. Johnson did when he kept secret the removal of a basal cell carcinoma on his ankle [2]; or they may paradoxically receive more compromised care than the general population, as illustrated by US President John F. Kennedy, whose treatments were overseen by a flurry of physicians each maneuvering for control of the president’s treatments. Added to the fact that he was himself a consummate doctor shopper, he consequently developed drug abuse and addiction to various medications, including penicillin, procaine, or amphetamines [3]. Furthermore, cutaneous conditions are harder to hide when they affect visible areas or when systemic treatments alter physical appearance [4].

US President Donald Trump (POTUS) recently attracted widespread media attention due to a visible rash on the right side of his neck, first spotted on 2 March 2026, during a Medal of Honor ceremony at the White House



Copyright: © 2026 by the authors. This is an open access article under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

Publisher’s Note: Scilight stays neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

[5]. Several dermatologists publicly speculated that the rash was consistent with topical treatments for actinic keratosis (AK) [6]. This study evaluated the impact of this event on online search behavior and media coverage and discusses its potential public health implications.

We used Google Trends (GT) data to analyze the search terms “actinic keratosis”, “imiquimod”, “fluorouracil”, “photodynamic therapy”, “rash”, and “skin cancer” in the United States and worldwide from 1 January 2026 to April 2026. “Cryotherapy” was excluded because it functions as a broad umbrella term covering multiple types of cold-based treatments, while “cryosurgery” was excluded because its limited use among the general public meant it did not yield reliable GT data. Wikipedia Pageviews Analysis was used to assess daily visits to the “actinic keratosis”, “cryotherapy”, “cryosurgery”, “imiquimod”, “fluorouracil” and “photodynamic therapy” articles on the English-language Wikipedia (URL: <https://en.wikipedia.org>, accessed on 17 August 2026).

GT analysis revealed the highest search peak for “fluorouracil” on 3 March 2026, both in the US and worldwide. A concurrent peak was observed for “AK” on the same date. A small peak was noted for “cryotherapy” on 2 March 2026. A secondary peak for “imiquimod” and “AK” was noted on 18 March 2026. These peaks represented the highest search volumes recorded during the first three months of the year (Figure 1). From 1 January to 1 March 2026, the English Wikipedia pages for fluorouracil, imiquimod, and AK received daily averages of 247, 109, and 403 pageviews, respectively. On 3 March 2026, pageviews rose to 997, 149, and 857, representing increases of +321%, +161%, and +126%, respectively, compared to 1 March 2026. The increase for “cryotherapy” between 1 March and 3 March was marginal (+6%). Pageviews declined the following day and returned to baseline within 4 to 5 days (Figure 2). No measurable increase in pageviews was observed for “cryosurgery”, “photodynamic therapy”, “skin cancer” and “rash”.

The health of POTUS has been under scrutiny for some time. He has previously been diagnosed with chronic venous insufficiency and recurrent bruising of the hands [7]. In the present case, the White House physician acknowledged the use of a “preventative skin treatment” without further specification, fueling considerable media speculation. Based on the White House physician report and POTUS’ public habitus (age, light skin type, sun-exposed life, long-time golf practice), several dermatologists subsequently suggested topical treatments such as imiquimod or 5-fluorouracil as likely candidates [6]. Without a formal confirmation, a diagnosis of AK or skin cancer remains purely speculative.

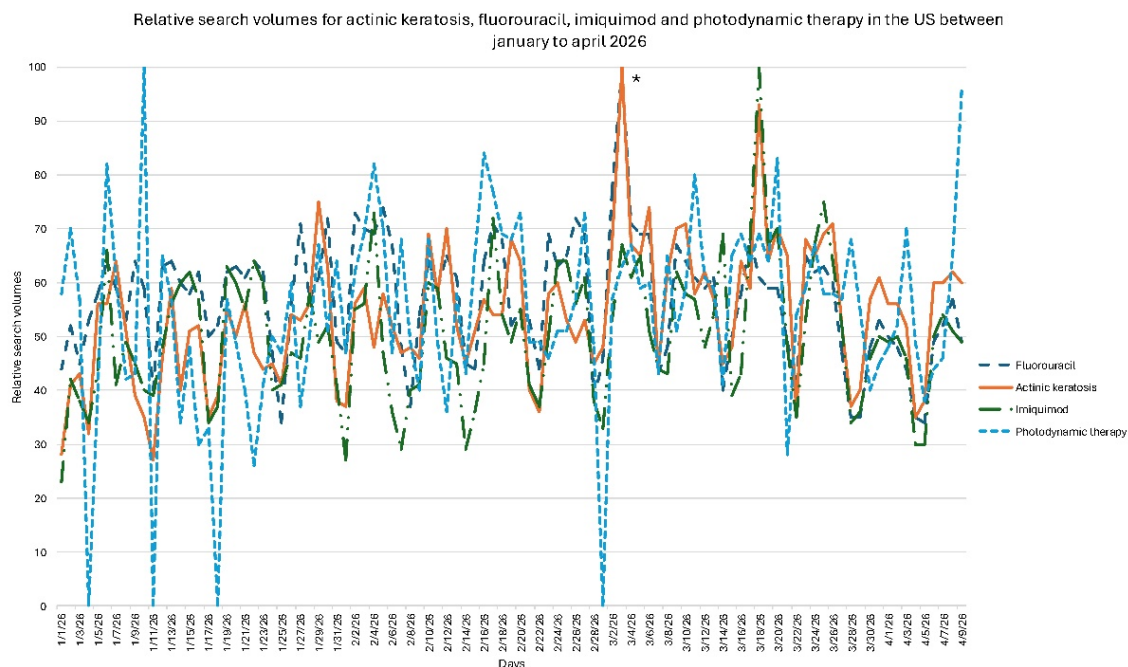


Figure 1. Relative search volumes for “actinic keratosis”, “fluorouracil”, “imiquimod” and “photodynamic therapy” on Google Trends between January and April 2026. The largest peak matches the day POTUS appeared at the White House for the Medal of Honor ceremony on 2 March 2026, as indicated by the *.

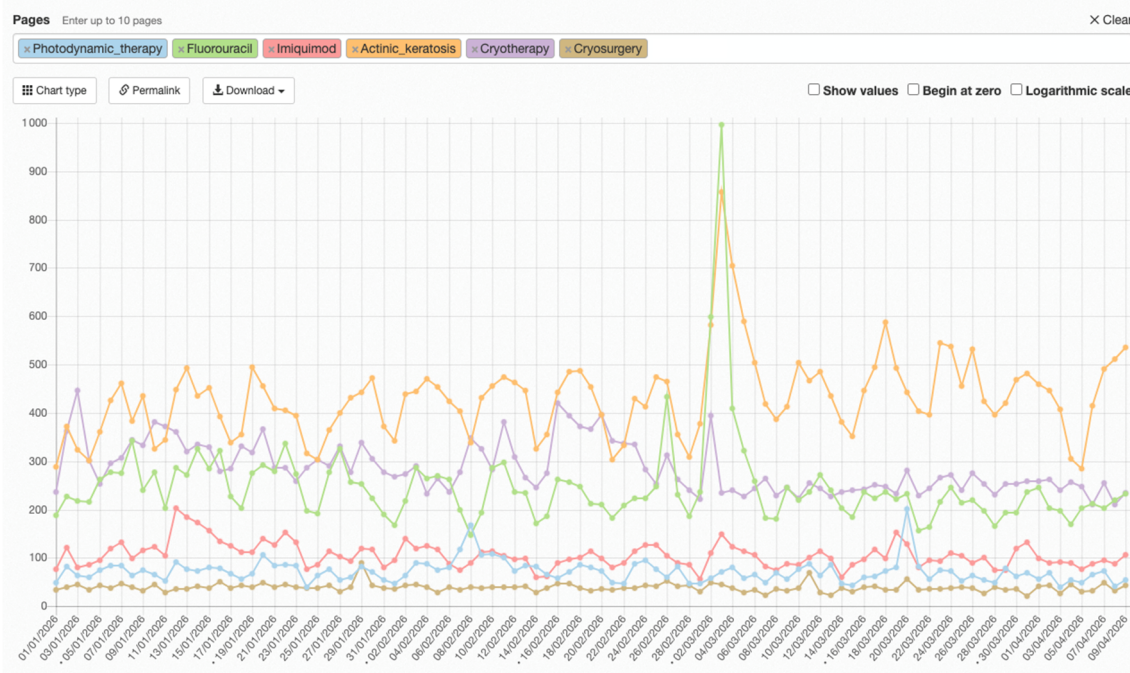


Figure 2. Pageviews analysis for articles about actinic keratosis, cryotherapy, cryosurgery, fluorouracil, imiquimod, and photodynamic therapy on Wikipedia (URL: <https://pageviews.wmcloud.org/>, accessed on 17 August 2026). Articles about “actinic keratosis”, “fluorouracil” and “imiquimod” saw a temporary uptick in traffic immediately following media coverage of POTUS’ neck rash.

GT and Wikipedia data both demonstrate a transient celebrity effect: a brief but measurable spike in public interest that returned to baseline within days, suggesting limited sustained impact, consistent with observations for other public figures. [8] The lack of official confirmation, and the fact that dermatological information was conveyed through speculative commentary rather than a formal diagnosis, likely blunted the public health benefit of this episode. However, the occurrence of skin cancers among US presidents is nothing new: Lyndon B. Johnson (1908–1973) had a basal cell carcinoma removed at the age of 59 [2], Ronald Reagan (1911–2004) [2] and Joe Biden (1942–) [9] had both basal cell carcinomas removed during and in the years following their presidencies. Lastly, Jimmy Carter (1924–2024) had a metastatic melanoma treated successfully with pembrolizumab [10]. The occurrence of visible cutaneous lesions in publicly exposed politicians raises ethical questions regarding medical confidentiality and public medical speculation, as illustrated by the Goldwater rule for psychiatrists [11]. The question of whether the Goldwater rule should apply to dermatologists remains open. Image-based diagnosis is one of the cornerstones of dermatology. The choice not to conceal a diagnosis is naturally the patient’s own choice. However, a transparent, confirmed announcement is a meaningful opportunity to raise awareness of one’s condition and its available treatments among the general population.

Author Contributions

N.K: conceptualization, methodology, data curation, writing, reviewing, and editing. The author has read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding

This research received no external funding. This work did not receive any grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

Institutional Review Board Statement

Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement

Not applicable.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

Use of AI and AI-Assisted Technologies

The author used the AI tool Claude.ai (Anthropic) solely to assist with the linguistic reformulation of this manuscript. All scientific content, interpretations, and conclusions are the sole responsibility of the author, who reviewed and approved the final version.

References

1. Robert Bourassa. (Obituary). Available online: <https://thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/robert-bourassa-obituary> (accessed on 7 July 2026).
2. Mlacker, S.; Aldahan, A.S.; Shah, V.V.; et al. Dermatologic Ailments in the White House. *JAMA Dermatol.* **2016**, *152*, 398.
3. McDermott, R. The politics of presidential medical care. The case of John F. Kennedy. *Politics Life Sci.* **2014**, *33*, 77–87.
4. Kluger, N.; Perciaccante, A.; Charlier, P.; et al. Skin conditions among 20th century politicians and world leaders. *J. Eur. Acad. Dermatol. Venereol.* **2022**, *35*, 2346–2348.
5. Alba M. White House Addresses 'Redness' on the Side of Trump's Neck. 2026. Available online: <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/donald-trump/white-house-addresses-redness-side-trumps-neck-rcna261379> (accessed on 28 May 2026).
6. Grenoble, R. What's Up with Trump's Angry Neck Rash? We Asked the Experts. Available online: https://www.huffpost.com/entry/trump-neck-rash-dermatologist_n_69a6fe12e4b0c9c664ad0036 (accessed on 28 May 2026).
7. Cancryn, A. Bruising on Trump's Left Hand Sparks Renewed Questions about His Health. Available online: <https://edition.cnn.com/2025/12/31/politics/health-trump-bruises-left-hand>, 2025 (accessed 28 May 2026).
8. Kluger, N. Impact of celebrities disclosing their skin conditions on public awareness. *JEADV Clin. Pract.* **2025**, *4*, 1228–1230.
9. O'Keefe, E.; Yilek, C. Biden Recently Had Skin Cancer Surgery, Spokeswoman Says. *CBC News*, 4 September 2025. Available online: <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/biden-skin-cancer-mohs-surgery/> (accessed on 7 July 2026).
10. American Association for Cancer Research. Jimmy Carter's Melanoma Appears to Respond to Immunotherapy. Available online: <https://www.aacr.org/patients-caregivers/progress-against-cancer/jimmy-carter/> (accessed on 7 July 2026).
11. McLoughlin, A. The Goldwater Rule: A bastion of a bygone era? *Hist. Psychiatry* **2022**, *33*, 87–94.