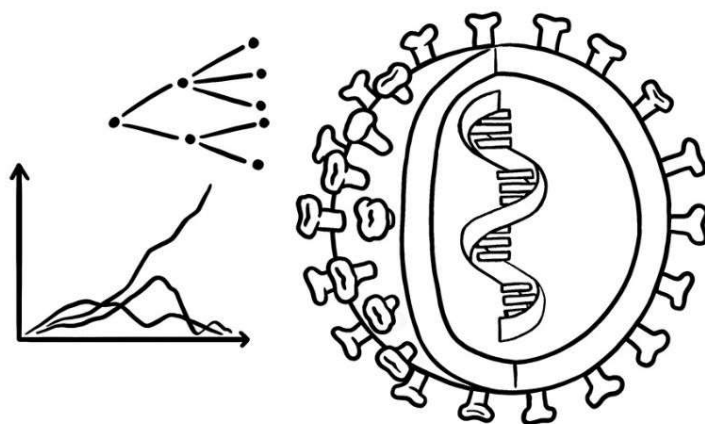


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INFORMATION



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Empowering Communities in an Infodemic News Flash

Tuesday 6 October 2020 – Inaugural Issue

WELCOME

We're delighted you've signed up to receive news about the WHO work on infodemic management. In each issue, we'll share a snapshot of our recent and upcoming activities and talk about the impact they're making. We'll highlight work happening at the global level, as well as provide a few key takeaways to help you be an effective infodemic manager in your daily life. Thanks for joining us on this journey!

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FEATURED ARTWORK

An infodemic is an overabundance of information—some accurate, some not—that spreads alongside a disease outbreak. Infodemics are nothing new, but in the digital age, they spread in real time and create a breeding ground for uncertainty. Uncertainty fuels scepticism and distrust, which is a perfect environment for fear, anxiety, finger-pointing, stigma, violent aggression and disregard for observing public health measures. To manage an infodemic, we need to understand what contributes to it. Watch the above animation to learn how misinformation and disinformation can spiral out of control and perpetuate an infodemic that can have harmful consequences.

RECENT EVENTS

Over the past 10 months we've all adopted a new vocabulary: "COVID", "shelter-in-place", "social distancing" and "infodemic." And now government leaders, corporate executives, social scientists, software engineers, health workers, policy wonks, tech nerds and everyday people like you and me are working to determine:

- What drives an infodemic?
- What indicators will help us monitor an infodemic?
- What tools do we need to control an infodemic?

So let's start here. Click through the list of events below and get lost in one of the sessions where WHO talks about different facets of the infodemic topic. "Infodemic" is the buzzword du jour. Knowing how to talk about it is not only a great party trick (for...you know...when we can go to parties again), it can help you keep the people you know and love informed on how to protect themselves from misinformation that may cause harm.

[UN Side Event, 23 September 2020:](#) Last week, to coincide with the United Nations General Assembly, WHO and partners hosted an event on the topic of "Managing the COVID-19 infodemic: promoting healthy behaviors and mitigating harm from misinformation and disinformation." The objective of this event was to review the lessons learned in infodemic management since the beginning of COVID-19 pandemic, and to highlight countries' experiences in tackling the infodemic.

[Pan American Health Organization & Inter-American Development Bank, 26 September 2020:](#) Listen to this clip recorded during a webinar about information systems and digital health, and its importance during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. This is a 6ish-minute listen and a great infodemic overview.

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Universal Access to Information, UNESCO convened key stakeholders to affirm their commitment to protect the right to information, so that communities can protect themselves, journalists can debunk false information and report the facts about COVID-19, and scientists and policymakers can deliver evidence-based guidance on how to combat the pandemic. WHO discussed the dangers of the infodemic and outlined what stakeholders can do to mitigate its impact.

European Health Forum Gastein, 28 September - 2 October 2020: WHO participated in the forum, which was focused around building new partnerships for health, democracy and business. In one session, WHO was challenged to take lessons learned from the pandemic and explore concepts that could help the European Union rethink how to set strong health governance. In another session that was hosted by the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), WHO discussed global platform concepts that will allow experts in data and public health to analyze large datasets for emergency preparedness and response.

UPCOMING EVENTS

European Broadcasting Union Event, 7 October 2020: WHO will participate in a discussion about the impact of disinformation during the pandemic, the reality of fighting disinformation for media reporting on the pandemic and how media can raise the bar to combat the problem.

The Royal Society of Tropical Medicine & Hygiene, 13-14 October 2020: WHO will participate in the annual meeting on emerging diseases and outbreaks.

PRovoke Global PR Summit, 19-21 October 2020: This summit is designed for public relations practitioners to address the critical issues facing the profession. WHO will participate to discuss the relationship between science, data and human safety, with an emphasis on how communicators can ensure the information they disseminate is accurate, accessible, and unbiased – made ever more urgent in the time of COVID-19.

America Public Health Association Annual Meeting, 26 October 2020: WHO will participate in a panel to explore the challenges of the COVID-19 infodemic in a post-digital era. The session will cover the dangerous aspects of the COVID-19 infodemic, and how to address it by promoting digital advocacy, science and evidence-based information.

Institute of Tropical Medicine, Antwerp, Annual Colloquium, 28 October 2020: WHO will participate on a panel focused on investigating the potential impact of mis- and

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for, potential game-changing, vaccines.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACTION & IMPACT

Do you want to play a role in helping manage the COVID-19 infodemic? Seize one of these opportunities below.

Call for applicants for 1st WHO training in infodemic management: Application deadline is 18 October 2020. To successfully mitigate the current infodemic and promote more effective future response, participants from the [WHO first infodemiology conference](#) recently contributed to a draft public health research agenda that cuts across many fields of specialization. From physics to law to behavioral science to epidemiology to user experience and design—it's clear that an infodemic manager would need a wider array of skills and expertise to successfully address infodemics that go beyond traditional boundaries of epidemiology, risk communication and community engagement and digital media. WHO and partners invite applications from experienced professionals from the fields of epidemiology, risk communication, health service delivery/health care workers, digital health, policy making (in health and intersectoral), who are responding to the current COVID-19 and overlapping infodemics at country level.

EPI-WIN webinars: If you have space in your schedule, we highly recommend attending these webinars or watching the recordings at your leisure. They're educational. And entertaining. They're edutaining! And let's be honest with ourselves, we're running low on new cute viral animal clips to watch anyway. [Here's a great one](#) on influencing risk perceptions about COVID-19.

COVID-19 Factchecking Tools: Ryerson University's Social Media Lab has been hard at work collaborating with the WHO to launch a couple interactive tools that help policymakers understand the fact-checking ecosystem and the proliferation of COVID-19 misinformation. In fact, you can now download a copy of the full COVID-19 Fact-Checkers dataset containing 216 fact-checkers via a publicly accessible [online data repository](#).

The COVID-19 Preventive Health Survey: This ongoing survey was launched in July 2020 through a partnership between Facebook, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), and Johns Hopkins Center for Communication Programs (CCP), and is advised on by the WHO and the Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network (GOARN). The survey aims to understand people's knowledge, attitudes and practices about COVID-19 to help policymakers, support organizations and health researchers to improve their response to the pandemic. It is fielded in 67 countries and territories with sampling from early July. Take a look at the survey findings

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WHAT WE'RE READING

There's a lot of new research published each day that provides evidence about infodemics. Below are a few recent articles we find interesting.

Harvard Kennedy School: Misinformation more likely to use non-specific authority references: Twitter analysis of two COVID-19 myths

The American Journal of Public Health: Limited Role of Bots in Spreading Vaccine-Critical Information Among Active Twitter Users in the United States: 2017–2019

Science Direct: Conspiracy theories as barriers to controlling the spread of COVID-19 in the U.S.

Have a tip on infodemic management or ideas for future news flashes? Send us an email:

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infodemictips@gmail.com

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