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World Health
Organization

2021 PRIORITIES

UN Secretary-General António Guterres



COVID-19
Response



Gender
Equality



Climate &
Biodiversity



Poverty &
Inequality



Sustainable &
Inclusive Recovery



Nuclear Disarmament
and Non-Proliferation



Peace &
Crisis Prevention



Human Rights



Digital Technologies



21st Century Reset

Feature Artwork

Hey! Infographics are art too!

On 28 January, UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, [outlined the UN's 2021 priorities](#), first of which is to respond to COVID-19 and all those ugly little spin-off problems that come with it. But by working together, infodemic managers can support communities and policymakers to make progress towards that end.

Guterres paints a grim picture where we've lost 2 million lives and 500 million jobs, where we're moving backwards in terms of equality, hunger and poverty. And where the lawlessness of the cyber world spawns hate speech, violence, crime, misinformation and disruption.

As astute infodemic managers, we can connect the dots to see how infodemics play a role in so many of the challenges we and our partners will be tasked to solve over the coming year.

But below—and with every issue of the News Flash since our first—this community shows it's increasingly chipping away at the problems with new digital tools, new approaches to measure and evaluate the scale of the problem, new methods for tackling issues at the local level and so much more.

Photo credit: [© 2021 UN](#)

Opportunities for Action



Early AI-supported Response with Social Listening

COVID-19 online conversations in 20 pilot countries

PURPOSE

Listening to people's questions and concerns is an important way for health authorities to learn about what matters to communities in response to COVID-19. This social listening platform aims to show real time information about how people are talking about COVID-19 online, so we can better manage as the infodemic and pandemic evolve.

[Learn more about the infodemic](#)

DATA

 **9,385,542**

posts analyzed since
15 December 2020

 **20**

countries
covered

 **4**

languages
analyzed

 **41**

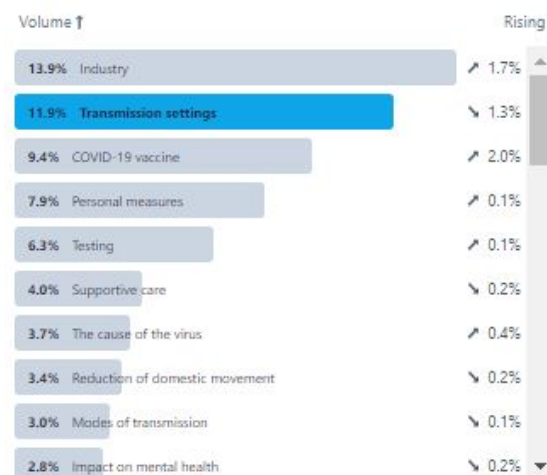
COVID-19
categories
tracked

[More about the data, limitations and how to interpret it](#)

What are people talking about?

Overview across countries

Click on a category to see it on the map



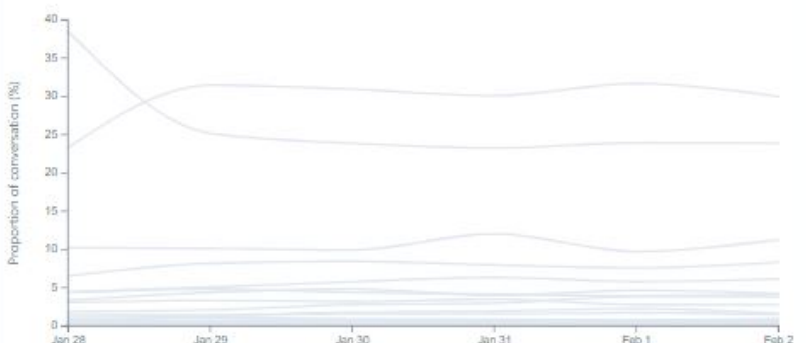
 Proportion (%) and rising proportion (%) of the conversation.

Trend of intensity per country

You are seeing data for **Transmission settings**

Select up to 5 countries

Highlight countries



Start using WHO's new AI-powered platform called EARS to conduct social listening.

WHO has developed [EARS, the Early AI-supported Response with Social Listening](#) tool, to help health authorities keep a finger on the pulse of online conversations that are happening in real time, so they can see what topics are trending, what's on the rise, and where there's a gap of credible information that needs to be filled.

When health authorities understand what topics are catching people's attention—and where there are information voids—they can respond in real-time with

high-quality, evidence-based information and intervention recommendations to health systems administrators.

EARS combs the internet, reading publicly available conversations on social media and commentary on blogs and news articles, and then analyses what people are discussing. By using natural language processing (NLP), EARS can interpret context cues like if people are asking questions, if they're complaining, and when there are gender differences.

EARS is currently in pilot phase following public conversations in 20 countries in French, English, Spanish and Portuguese. It's analysing 39 narratives based on keywords and hashtags and can be scaled to study any local context, language or future health threat. The platform can also readily incorporate other datasets, and resulting metrics data are available in an open API for infodemic analysts to use and share insights widely.



Take a free COVID-19 vaccination training.

WHO and UNICEF have partnered to produce two free online courses so frontline health workers have global access to critical knowledge about efficient COVID-19 vaccine administration. Delivering high-quality, accurate

information alongside vaccine delivery is critical to infodemic management.

Visit [OpenWHO.org](https://openwho.org) to start learning today:

- [This course](#) provides COVID-19 vaccination training for health workers
- [This course](#) is an orientation to national deployment and vaccination planning for COVID-19 vaccines



MOOC

on Implementation Research

for countries of the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region*

This free online course – MOOC – will introduce you to designing IR projects that make proven health interventions more widely available to people at risk of diseases of poverty

Take a MOOC on implementation research.

This Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) is for countries of the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region. It's a step-by-step online training that will introduce you to designing implementation research projects that make proven health interventions more widely available to people at risk of diseases of poverty. [Find more details here.](#)



JOHNS HOPKINS

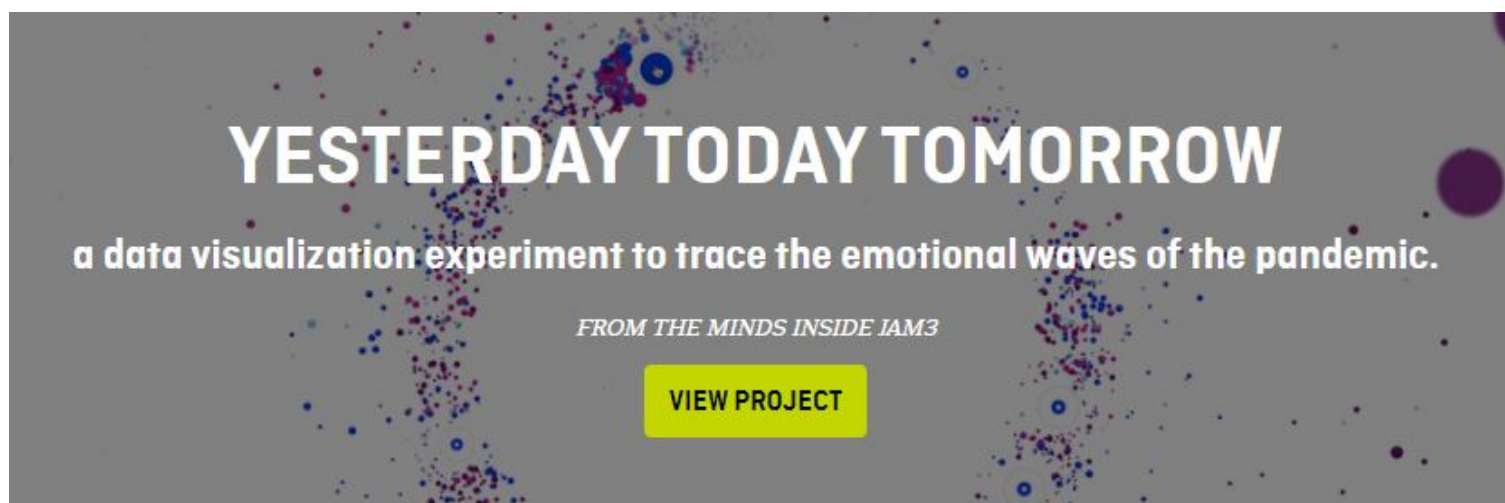
Center for Communication Programs

Explore data on vaccine acceptance from 67 countries worldwide.

Updated for global health specialists as well as for the public, the Global Vaccine Acceptance dashboard is the latest in the KAP COVID series of data visualization tools. This dashboard presents a series of country and regional-level responses to questions related to vaccine acceptance, channels of influence and responses broken down by demographic categories. This tool utilizes data from more than 1.5 million individuals across 67 countries since July 2020.

The effort is a collaboration among Johns Hopkins Center for Communication Programs, Facebook Data for Good and MIT, and is advised by WHO and the Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network (GOARN).

Explore the data: [Vaccine Acceptance Around the World](#).



Enter the experience!

The National Film Board of Canada has designed the [Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow](#) experience to make the emotional impact of the pandemic visible.

Explore hundreds of thousands of Tweets, organized by sentiment. Follow the curves, layers, and patterns of our collective feelings. What you'll see is a story of resilience. People making sense, finding solace, and moving forward.



European Parliament
EUROPEAN PARLIAMENTARY
RESEARCH SERVICE

EUROPEAN SCIENCE-MEDIA HUB

BRINGING SCIENTISTS, JOURNALISTS AND POLICYMAKERS TOGETHER : COMMUNICATE BETTER SOUND SCIENCE TO ALL!

Add this to your list of infodemic management resources.

Aiming at helping the public navigate the massive information flow and find answers to their questions in knowledge-based science news, the ESMH developed a specific project to address the spread of deceptive narratives and to better understand the inner dynamics of the infodemic. [Here you'll find:](#)

- A [list](#) of relevant initiatives tackling the enormous spread of false information on various aspects of the health crisis
- [Monthly reports](#) collecting the main false claims related to Covid-19 trending on selected social media
- A series of [interviews](#) with experts on dis- and misinformation
- Thematic [news articles](#) focusing on selected aspects of the crisis



Become a Birdwatcher.

[Birdwatch](#) is a new program launched by Twitter to combat misinformation on the platform, using volunteers to help determine the reliability of content. [According to Twitter](#), Birdwatch invites selected users “to identify information in Tweets they believe is misleading and write notes that provide informative context.” Eventually, Twitter plans to attach curated versions of these notes directly to tweets. [Find out how to become a Birdwatcher.](#)

Upcoming Events

Health and Humanity



11 February 2021

The Nordic Health 2030 Movement and the European Health Futures Forum are hosting Humanity Rising Day 182. This is the first of five webinars examining different aspects of health in its widest sense, starting by looking at the context of societies and communities working together. [Register to join the live Zoom](#), or follow the event's live-stream at the following links:

- [Facebook](#)
- [YouTube](#)
- [AwakeTV](#)



17 February 2021

The Road to Bern initiative was launched in January 2020 to support the discussion and exchanges before the 3rd United Nations World Data Forum in October 2021 in Bern. The event on 17 February, "On Data And Design" will cover different aspects of the SDGs including:

- How can data visualization support, but also mislead the communication?
- How are the United Nations communicating data visually?
- How is a national statistical office using and improving new approaches of data visualization to communicate with the data users?

This event will be held in English only. IMPORANT: Please RSVP for the event on [Eventbrite](#) or [Meetup](#) to receive the streaming link.

Improving Social Media: Misinformation & Free Expression

Thurs, Feb 25 | 1pm ET | LIVESTREAM



Dr. Jasmine McNealy
Associate Professor of Telecommunication
at the University of Florida
Law & Policy Expert

**How do we tackle misinformation
& disinformation while also
promoting free expression?**

**Join us online for a conversation
with two experts working toward
a better tech future.**

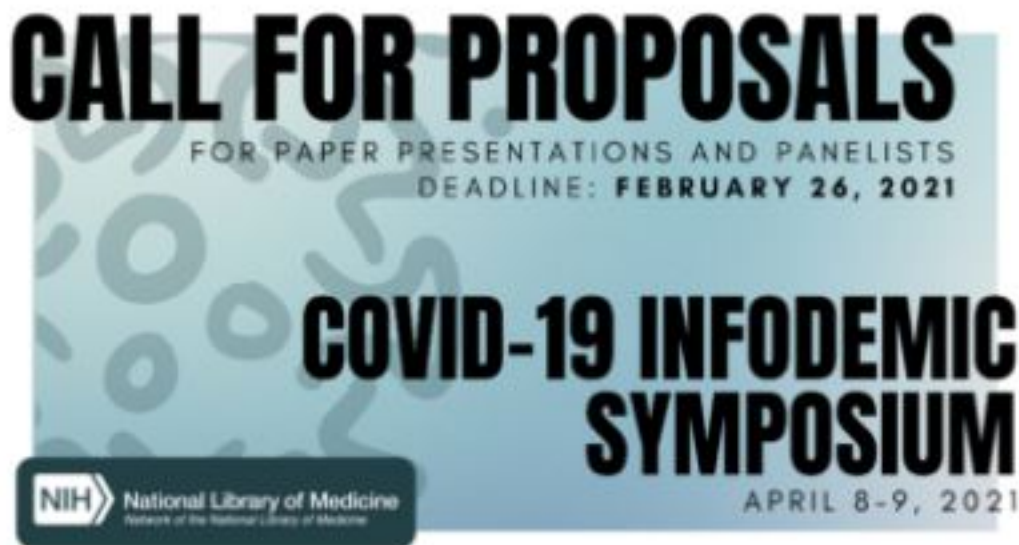
**AllTechIsHuman.org
TheBridgeWork.com**



Dr. Claire Wardle
Co-founder and director of First Draft
Misinformation Expert

[25 February 2021](#)

[All Tech Is Human](#) and [The Bridge](#) are hosting an interactive livestream to discuss information ecosystems as they're related to the health of democracy and how we can tackle mis- and disinformation while promoting free expression. [Register to attend.](#)



[8-9 April 2021](#)

The Network of the National Library of Medicine (NNLM) invites proposals for a virtual symposium: *Responding to the COVID-19 Infodemic*, on April 8-9, 2021. **Proposals are due by 11:59PM, February 26, 2021.** [Submit here.](#)

Proposals for presentations and panel discussions related to COVID-19

misinformation and disinformation should include but are not limited to:

- Health equity across a variety of demographic factors (race, gender, geography, socioeconomic status, etc.)
- Vaccination
- Emergency preparedness and response
- Public health
- Communication
- Community outreach and programming
- Education



7-11 June 2021

The 2020/2021 Edition of the [Pan African Health Informatics \(HELINA-2021\) conference](#) will be held in Kampala, Uganda as a blended virtual and in-person conference due to Covid-19. The conference will be hosted by the Uganda Health Informatics Association (UgHIA - <https://ughia.org>) in partnership with the Makerere University, School of Public Health and the Ministry of Health (MOH), Uganda under the theme ***“leveraging digital health for public health emergencies within routine care in Low- and Middle-Income Countries”***

The main theme for the conference was inspired by the Covid-19 pandemic and the role that digital health technologies play in such public health emergencies and particularly, their increasing adoption and use during the current pandemic. The conference will also focus on digital solutions in routine care and the role of digital health in supporting continuity of care in a pandemic such as Covid-19.

Key dates:

- Abstract registration deadline: **28 February 2021**
- Submission deadline: **30 April 2021**



14-16 September 2021

Important dates for the Data for Policy conference have changed!

This conference series is the premier global forum for multiple disciplinary and cross-sector discussions around the theories, applications and implications of data science innovation in governance and the public sector. [See new key dates here.](#)

- Extended abstract and full paper submission deadline is **25 March 2021 (provisional)**
- Notification of acceptance with reviewer comments and invitation to submit revised versions for those accepted is **11 June 2021 (provisional)**
- Registration deadline for presenters is **23 July 2021 (provisional)**
- Submission of revised paper for a second round of review for journal (compulsory) – along with submitting any pre-conference material upload on Zenodo; submission of video (if relevant) (optional) is **20 August 2021 (provisional)**



2-4 October 2021

You can submit a scientific paper to MedInfo's [“One World, One Health: Global Partnership for Digital Innovation” Virtual Conference](#), which is being held 2-4 October 2021. Here are the key dates you need to remember:

- Submissions Opened: January 25, 2021
- Submissions Deadline: April 26, 2021
- Notification of Acceptance: June 30, 2021
- Mandatory Author Registration: July 30, 2021

Recent Events

COVERING THE COVID-19 VACCINE: WHAT JOURNALISTS NEED TO KNOW

FREE WEBINAR. 29 JANUARY 2021. 9A.M. - 12 P.M. (UTC -6)



MODERATED BY
Maryn McKenna
Health and science journalist

LIVESTREAMED in English, French, Spanish, Arabic, Portuguese
Recordings to be available in more languages

WATCH ON: [Youtube.com/KnightCenterMOOC](https://www.youtube.com/KnightCenterMOOC)



The University of Texas at Austin
**Knight Center for Journalism
in the Americas**
Moody College of Communication



**World Health
Organization**



[29 January 2021](#)

Hosted by UNESCO, the Knight Center for Journalism in the Americas at the University of Texas at Austin, WHO and with funding from the European Union, this open webinar aims to help journalists deepen their understanding and coverage of COVID-19 immunization and offers insights related to the vaccination development and rollout.

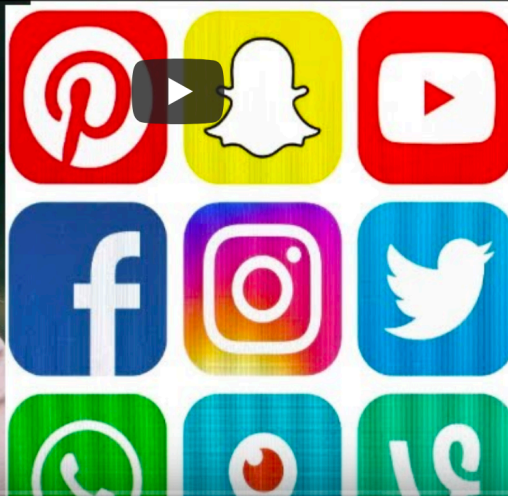
Find the websites and recordings here:

- English: [website](#), [recording](#)
- French: [website](#), [recording](#)
- Spanish: [website](#), [recording](#)

COMUNICAÇÃO EM SAÚDE E FAKE NEWS NA COVID-19



Live 25/janeiro, 19h



[25 January 2021](#)

One of WHO's newly trained infodemic manager unicorns ran a webinar in Brazil on DESINFORMAÇÃO E FAKE NEWS NA PANDEMIA DE COVID-19: causas, motivações e soluções. [Watch the recording here.](#)

Noteworthy Multimedia

[28 January 2021](#)

In this episode, Lawfare speaks with Joan Donovan, the research director at the Shorenstein Center on Media, Politics and Public Policy at the Harvard Kennedy School, about disinformation and social movements. [Listen to the podcast here.](#)



Job opportunities



UNICEF Thailand, Bangkok

Consultancy: Communication for Development (C4D) Technical Support for COVID-19



Syracuse University

Open-Rank Tenure - Track Faculty Position: Digital Misinformation

Social Science in Humanitarian Action Platform

Inaugural Social Scientist Fellowship Program in Low- and Middle-Income Countries

SSHAP



THE UNIVERSITY OF
**WESTERN
AUSTRALIA**

The University of Western Australia

[Research Associate](#): Combating
Misinformation



Sabin Vaccine Institute

[Senior Research Manager](#): Digital
Media



ICRC

ICRC

[Health Digital Challenge Manager](#)

What We're Reading

PNAS

Proceedings of the
National Academy of Sciences
of the United States of America

[Timing matters when correcting fake news](#)

2 February 2021

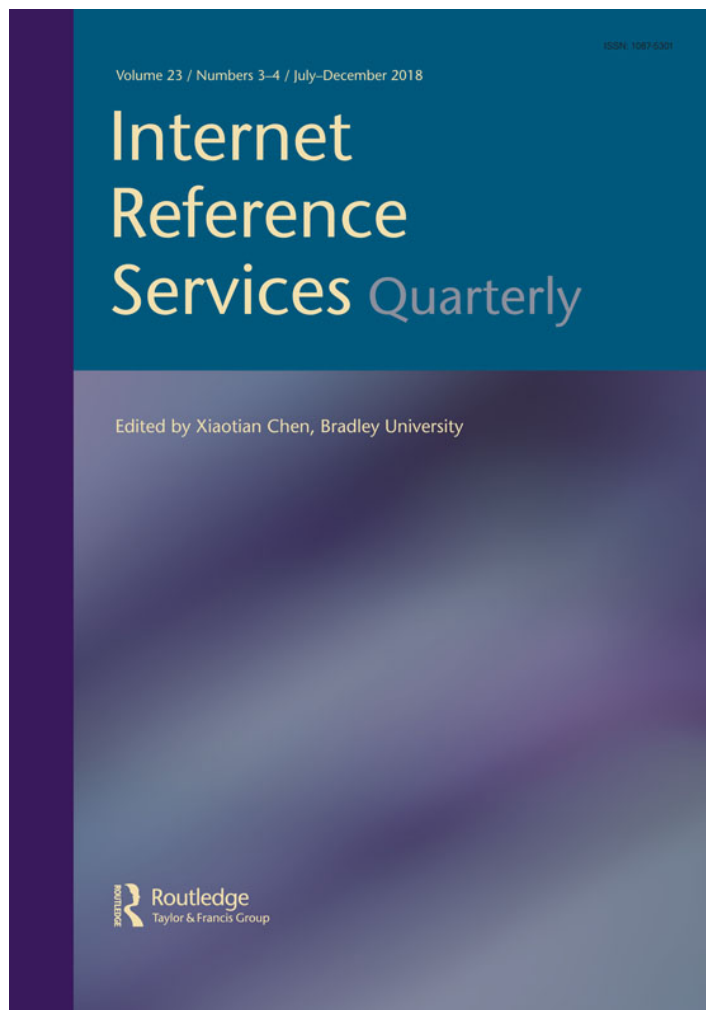
Countering misinformation can reduce belief in the moment, but corrective messages quickly fade from memory. These authors tested whether the longer-term impact of fact-checks depends on when people receive them. In two experiments (total $N = 2,683$), participants read true and false headlines taken from social media. In the treatment conditions, “true” and “false” tags appeared before, during, or after participants read each headline. Participants in a control condition received no information about veracity. One week later, participants in all conditions rated the same headlines’ accuracy. Providing fact-checks after headlines (*debunking*) improved subsequent truth discernment more than providing the same information during (*labeling*) or before (*prebunking*) exposure. This finding informs the cognitive science of belief revision and has practical implications for social media platform designers.

[COVID-19 as a turning point in the fight against disinformation](#)

25 January 2021



The COVID-19 pandemic has brought an infodemic of misleading and unreliable information. In response, social media platforms have taken unprecedented steps to moderate content and promote official sources of information, which, combined with new policies and appropriate communication, could help tackle misinformation.



[The COVID-19 Misinformation Challenge: An Asynchronous Approach to Information Literacy](#)
25 January 2021

The coronavirus pandemic introduced a “new normal” to the everyday lives of people the world over, including an evolving understanding of the virus’ spread and long-term impact. With each new development, misinformation about COVID-19 proliferated, sowing confusion and uncertainty about everything from causes to cures. In response, two librarians designed The COVID-19 Misinformation Challenge, a weeklong program aimed at discerning coronavirus fact from fiction on social media, in the news, and in academic publishing. Based on the number of program participants and their overwhelmingly



positive feedback, the Challenge proved to be popular, fun, and educational.

[Predictors of COVID-19 Information Sources and Their Perceived Accuracy in Nigeria: Online Cross-sectional Study](#)

25 January 2021

Effective communication is critical for mitigating the public health risks associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. This study assesses the source(s) of COVID-19 information among people in Nigeria, as well as the predictors and the perceived accuracy of information from these sources. The internet was the most common source of COVID-19 information, and the population sampled had a relatively high level of perceived accuracy for the COVID-19 information received. Effective communication requires dissemination of information via credible communication channels, as identified from this study. This can be potentially beneficial for risk communication to control the pandemic.

[How to place users at the heart of multimedia storytelling](#)



Digital

25 January 2021

Adriano Gazza, Multimedia team lead for the NHS website, explains how the principles of user-centred design can help create engaging video, animation and infographic content for the public that is clinically accurate.

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THE JOURNAL OF MEDIA LAW

ARTICLES

Terrorism, the internet, and the threat to freedom of expression: the regulation of digital intermediaries in Europe and the United States
ELIZA BECHTOLD

More serious harm than good? An empirical observation and analysis of the effects of the serious harm requirement in section 1(1) of the Defamation Act 2013
CHARLIE SEWELL

Gender portrayals in advertising: stereotypes, inclusive marketing and regulation
ALEXANDROS ANTONIOU AND DIMITRIS AKRIVOS

Against strike-outs for disproportionality
HARRY STRATTON

 Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

[From journalistic ethics to fact-checking practices: defining the standards of content governance in the fight against disinformation](#)

22 January 2021

This article claims that the practices undertaken by digital platforms to counter disinformation, under the EU Action Plan against Disinformation and the Code of Practice, mark a shift in the governance of news media content. While professional journalism standards have been used for long, both within and outside the industry, to assess the accuracy of news content and adjudicate on media conduct, the platforms are now resolving to different fact-checking routines to moderate and curate their content. The article demonstrates how fact-checking organisations have different working methods than news operators and ultimately understand and assess ‘accuracy’ in different



ways. As a result, this new and enhanced role for platforms and fact-checkers as curators of content impacts on how content is distributed to the audience and, thus, on media freedom. Depending on how the fact-checking standards and working routines will consolidate in the near future, however, this trend offers an actual opportunity to improve the quality of news and the right to receive information.

[Analyzing the social context of health information and misinformation during the COVID-19 pandemic: a case of emerging inequities in Lebanon](#)

21 January 2021

In this paper, the authors refer to social science and risk communication theory to discuss how the political, economic and social contexts in the country, and not only the content of the messages that people receive from officials, affect how they interpret and act on information. They highlight how this has played out in Lebanon and identify societal aspects of importance in a low-middle income country fraught with social, economic and political inequalities which continue to undermine the efforts to contain the spread of COVID-19.



Implications to inform state response in the context of low-middle income countries are also discussed.

[Effects of Objective and Subjective Health Literacy on Patients' Accurate Judgment of Health Information and Decision-Making Ability: Survey Study](#)

21 January 2021

Interpreting health information and acquiring health knowledge have become more important with the accumulation of scientific medical knowledge and ideals of patient autonomy. Health literacy and its tremendous success as a concept can be considered an admission that not all is well in the distribution of health knowledge. The internet makes health information much more easily accessible than ever, but it introduces its own problems, of which health disinformation is a major one. The objective of this study was to determine whether objective and subjective health literacy are independent concepts and to test which of the two was associated more strongly with accurate judgments of the quality of a medical website and with behavioral intentions beneficial to health. Self-reported, perception-

based health literacy should be treated as a separate concept from objective, performance-based health literacy. Only objective health literacy appears to have the potential to prevent people from becoming victims of health disinformation.



[Too little, too late: social media companies' failure to tackle vaccine misinformation poses a real threat](#)

21 January 2021

As the world looks to the new covid-19 vaccines with hope, there are major worries about how social media will affect uptake. Claire Wardle and Eric Singerman ask what the companies in charge should be doing to stem the misinformation tide.



[Prevalence of Health Misinformation on Social Media: Systematic Review](#)

20 January 2021

Although at present there is broad agreement among researchers, health professionals, and policy makers on the need to control and combat health misinformation, the magnitude of this problem is still unknown. Consequently, it is fundamental to discover both the most prevalent health topics and the social media platforms from which

these topics are initially framed and subsequently disseminated. This systematic review aimed to identify the main health misinformation topics and their prevalence on different social media platforms, focusing on methodological quality and the diverse solutions that are being implemented to address this public health concern. The prevalence of health misinformation was the highest on Twitter and on issues related to smoking products and drugs. However, misinformation on major public health issues, such as vaccines and diseases, was also high. This study offers a comprehensive characterization of the dominant health misinformation topics and a comprehensive description of their prevalence on different social media platforms, which can guide future studies and help in the development of evidence-based digital policy action plans.



Europe PMC

[Debunking the Misinfodemic: Coronavirus Social Media Contains More, Not Less, Credible Content](#)

5 January 2021

Several high-profile sources have focused worldwide attention on the dangers of misinformation about COVID, with the World Health Organization declaring a COVID-19

social media "infodemic". Prior work has associated such misinformation with low-credibility sources that are known to spread conspiracy theories and malicious content. In this pre-print article, the authors report the results of an analysis of over 500 million social media posts from Twitter and Facebook between March 8 and May 1, 2020.

FIGHTING HEALTH INFODEMICS: THE ROLE OF CITIZEN EMPOWERMENT

Vol.26 | No.3 | 2020



As an increasing number of people receive and share health information on social media, and misinformation and conspiracy claims have become prevalent on these platforms. To meet this challenge, a comprehensive strategy is necessary, with the empowerment of citizens at its heart. In this comprehensive strategy, big tech, expert organisations and governments have to contribute to reduce obviously false information on social media platforms. However, top down surveillance is not always possible or desirable. Citizens should also become more motivated and skilled to engage in corrective efforts when they



encounter misinformation online.

[Retracted Covid-19 papers and the levels of 'citation pollution': A preliminary analysis and directions for further researchs](#)

2020

Retraction Watch maintains a "running list" of retracted papers on Covid-19 related research. By the end of September 2020, thirty-three retracted Covid-19 papers were listed. We analysed these retracted papers, focusing specifically on how they have been cited by review papers, and subsequently how they have penetrated and potentially distorted public discourse and legitimate research on Covid-19. The study demonstrates the need for more in-depth studies that focus on the phenomenon of citation pollution. We show that the "Covid-19 publication race", amplified by a pressure-to-publish research culture, distorted published science on Covid-19. We highlight the urgency to engage popular media and critical decision makers on how to distinguish between questionable and legitimate science. We also emphasise the importance of dealing with illegitimate research in a timely manner, both from a scholarly communications and research

Fun With Numbers

9,424,874

That's the number (at the time of release) of posts analyzed since 15 December 2020 through WHO's new [EARS](#) platform.

Just imagine the olden days where you would have to set up your keyword searches and manually sift through Twitter posts to figure out what matters to people, what's bothering them, and what questions they're asking the ether to answer.

Gone are those days! And with your participation, the EARS pilot tool will grow more intelligent and sophisticated and will help health authorities around the world meet their citizens' information needs.

Check out the [EARS platform](#) and help us improve its function in the following ways:

- [Suggest a data source](#) for us to mine
- [Suggest conversation topics](#) and keywords you think need to be researched
- [Connect with us](#) if you have ideas for optimising performance or data visualization
- [Tell us](#) how you're using the EARS data

About the News Flash

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 skepticism and distrust, which is perfect environment for fear, anxiety, finger-pointing, stigma, violent aggression and dismissal of proven public health measures. To manage an infodemic, we need to understand what contributes to it. So that’s why we’re sending you these updates. In each issue of the WHO’s Infodemic Management News Flash we’ll share the latest work happening at the global level, as well as highlight some of the challenges and solutions with infodemics in local contexts. We’ll also provide you with a few takeaways to help you be an effective infodemic manager in your daily life.

If you have a tip on infodemic management or an idea for a future News Flash, email us at **infodemicmanagement@who.int**. Thanks for joining us on this journey.



Our mailing address is: infodemicmanagement@who.int

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