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SOCIAL MEDIA, PROLIFERATION FAKE OF NEWS ABOUT COVID-19.

Coronaviruses are a group of related viruses that cause diseases in mammals and birds. In humans, coronaviruses cause respiratory tract infections that can range from mild to lethal. Mild illnesses include some cases of the common cold (which has other possible causes, predominantly rhinoviruses), while more lethal varieties can cause SARS, MERS, and COVID-19. Symptoms in other species vary: in chickens, they cause an upper respiratory tract disease, while in cows and pigs they cause diarrhea. There are yet to be vaccines or antiviral drugs to prevent or treat human coronavirus infections.

Coronaviruses were first discovered in the 1930s when an acute respiratory infection of domesticated chickens was shown to be caused by infectious bronchitis virus (IBV). In the 1940s, two more animal coronaviruses, mouse hepatitis virus (MHV) and transmissible gastroenteritis virus (TGEV), were isolated. Human coronaviruses were discovered in the 1960s. The earliest ones studied were from human patients with the common cold, which were later named human coronavirus 229E and human coronavirus OC43. Other human coronaviruses have since been identified, including SARS-CoV in 2003, HCoV NL63 in 2004, HKU1 in 2005, MERS-CoV in 2012, and SARS-CoV-2 in 2019. Most of these have involved serious respiratory tract infections.

Coronaviruses vary significantly in risk factor. Some can kill more than 30% of those infected (such as MERS-CoV), and some are relatively harmless, such as the common cold. Coronaviruses cause colds with major symptoms, such as fever, and a sore throat from swollen adenoids, occurring primarily in the winter and early spring seasons. Coronaviruses can cause pneumonia (either direct viral pneumonia or secondary bacterial pneumonia) and bronchitis (either direct viral bronchitis or secondary bacterial bronchitis).

In December 2019, a pneumonia outbreak was reported in Wuhan, China. On 31 December 2019, the outbreak was traced to a novel strain of coronavirus, which was given the interim name 2019-nCoV by the World Health Organization (WHO), later renamed SARS-CoV-2 by the International Committee on Taxonomy of Viruses. Some researchers have suggested the Huanan Seafood Wholesale Market may not be the original source of viral transmission to humans.

As of 11 April 2020, there have been at least 104,800 confirmed deaths and more than 1,721,353 confirmed cases in the coronavirus pneumonia pandemic. The virus has a 96% similarity to a bat coronavirus, so it is widely suspected to originate from bats as well. The pandemic has resulted in travel restrictions and nationwide lockdowns in several countries.

Here’s what to look for if you think you might have COVID-19.

Common Symptoms

According to information gathered from researchers in China, the most comon symptoms among people who had COVID-19 include:

\*Fever 83%-99%

\*Cough 59%-82%

\*Fatigue 44%-70%

\*Lack of appetite 40%-84%

\*Shortness of breath 31%-40%

\*Mucus/phlegm 28%-33%

\*Body aches 11%-35%

Symptoms usually begin 2 to 14 days after you come into contact with the virus.

Other symptoms may include:

\*Sore throat

\*Headache

\*Chills

\*Stuffy nose

\*Nausea or vomiting

\*Diarrhea

If you have any of these symptoms, isolate yourself. This means staying away from other people as much as possible, even members of your family. Stay in a specific “sick room,” and use a separate bathroom if you can. If you have symptoms and are at high risk of complications because of your age or other health conditions, call your doctor in addition to isolating yourself.

Serious Symptoms

Call a doctor or hospital right away if you have one or more of these COVID-19 symptoms:

\*Trouble breathing

\*Constant pain or pressure in your chest

\*Bluish lips or face

\*Sudden confusion

You need medical care as soon as possible. Call your doctor’s office or hospital before you go in. This will help them prepare to treat you and protect medical staff and other patients. Lab tests can tell if COVID-19 is what’s causing your symptoms. But the tests can be hard to find, and there’s no treatment if you do have the disease. So you don’t need to get tested if you have no symptoms or only mild ones. Call your doctor or your local health department if you have questions.

COVID-19 may have brought the world to a stand still, but one thing that is still moving is information. Every day, new information is spread on television, social media and in print. But how can you be sure what you’re seeing is true when so many sources proclaim to have the latest news? In thinking about what fake news is, it helps to say what fake news is not: Fake news is not information that runs contrary to, criticizes or otherwise challenges your most cherished beliefs. Just because it is news you don’t want to hear doesn’t make it fake.

The biggest fake news problem during the pandemic is people spreading information that will only serve to make the situation worse. This ranges from bad medical advice: “If you drink enough water, it will wash the virus out of your system and you’ll be fine,” to pandemic denial: “COVID-19 is just the flu and this whole thing is a hoax to control us and make us submissive to authority. Resist!!” That’s the kind of fake news that will kill people and needlessly extend the physical, emotional and economic pain caused by the pandemic. The social media is one of the biggest sources of acquiring information (wether fake or real) about the COVID-19. It is important to remember that in the age of social media, there is money to be made by standing out in the crowd, in distinguishing yourself from everyone else who is out there hustling for online fame and resultant fortune. It is easier to attract followers and advertisers by being outrageous than it is by saying rational things like “Listen to the professionals. Maintain social distancing.”

The most outrageous sorts of fake news about COVID-19 are pretty easy to spot. For instance, if somebody claims to have a simple cure for COVID-19, logic tells you it has to be fake news. If there were a simple cure, why on Earth wouldn’t every politician, business leader and health professional on the planet be embracing it? But then again not everyone is literate enough to spot some of these fake news.

Here are some tips to consider when reading about the covid-19 pandemic to make sure it’s not fake news;

\*Who is the author/publisher/creator of the information and what are their qualifications?

\*When was the information created?

\*Did you read beyond the headline/title?

\*Is the information a primary source (scientists reporting on their own research) or a secondary source (a journalist reporting about research conducted by scientists)? If possible, check out the primary source.

\*Does the information cite other credible sources?

\*Can you find other credible, independent sources that support, or contradict, the information you found?

\*Does the information report something that completely contradicts the common wisdom?

\*Is the information a joke?

When all these tips are considered before reading about the covid-19 pandemic then the proliferation of fake news can be curbed and we’d see ourselves healing from this pandemic soon enough so long as we all take safety precautions.

STAY SAFE!