Question

Social media and proliferation of fake news, dodgy health advice and fake cures of COVID19.

ANSWER

By Elizabeth Kennedy,

Unreliable and false information is spreading around the world to such an extent, that some commentators are now referring to the new avalanche of misinformation that’s accompanied the COVID-19 pandemic as a ‘disinfodemic’. Social media sites shoulder the huge responsibility of stemming the spread of rumours. Facing pressure from the WHO, Facebook, Instagram and YouTube confirmed that they have taken measures to counter disinformation about the coronavirus. Some of the disinformation are below;

• Temperature as a cure

Just as the scientific community didn’t give Trump’s theories on COVID-19’s survival in high temperatures a seal of approval – hand dryers and UV lamps don’t effectively guard against the virus – the WHO has also discredited the idea that cold weather and snow can kill the new virus.

• Youthful immunity

The virus doesn’t just impact the elderly, although being in a fragile state influences the body’s ability to fight infection.

•. Garlic

Lots of posts that recommend eating garlic to prevent infection are being shared on Facebook.The WHO (World Health Organization) says that while it is "a healthy food that may have some antimicrobial properties", there's no evidence that eating garlic can protect people from the new coronavirus.In lots of cases, these kinds of remedies aren't harmful in themselves, as long as they aren't preventing you from following evidence-based medical advice. But they have the potential to be.

• Chloroquine and Hydroxychloroquine are Covid-19 cures

Chloroquine and its counterpart, hydroxychloroquine, has been all the rage following reports that it has shown some promise in curing the coronavirus. The position of the United States’ President, Donald Trump, that the drugs have shown “tremendous promise” and could be a “game-changer” has sent many stocking up on the drugs. Media reports indicate people have overdosed on the drugs and have had to receive medical treatment following these claims.

• Dettol is effective against the Covid-19

This claim has been shared extensively on social media platforms such as WhatsApp, not just in Nigeria but in other parts of the world.

It showed an image of a Dettol bottle with the word ‘coronavirus’ circled laying emphasis on the antiseptic’s ability to deal with the novel coronavirus, Covid-19.Manufacturers of the Dettol, Reckitt Benckiser Group plc(RB), says it has not yet tested its products on the novel coronavirus and could not confirm whether Dettol is effective against the new coronavirus strain

Drinking alcohol e.g. dry gin kills the virus; also good substitute for hand sanitizers

Following a shortage of hand sanitizer around the world, people are devising means to keep safe. Some have claimed that alcoholic bitters or spirits, , can serve as a good substitute for hand sanitizers. This claim has been debunked by health experts. Alcoholic bitters and spirits on the market have between 40 - 50 per cent alcohol content. This is according to the WHO and the Centre for Plant Medicine Research. An effective hand sanitizer must have 60-70 per cent alcohol content.