NAME: OYELOLA OLUWAPELUMI OLUWASEYI

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LECTURER: MRS OLUWASHOLA

QUESTION: Social media and proliferation of fake news, dodgy health advice and cures of COVUD-19

During times of chaos and pandemics like the COVID-19 virus a lot of news goes around mostly fake because at this time we become very gullible because of fear and that is the reason many people are going around spreading fake news, fake cures and all such. This write-up is to highlight the fake news that has been going around and keep you on track with only facts.

### **Transmission via mosquito bites**

Although it’s always appropriate to keep a safe distance from the insect that spreads paludism and dengue fever, respiratory viruses don’t seem, at this stage, to be transmitted by mosquito bites, but by droplets of saliva or nasal secretions expelled by an infected person when coughing or sneezing. Speaking of animals, no house pets seem to have been infected by the new coronavirus.

### **Transmission via parcels from China**

Although their lifespan varies depending on the environment and temperature, pathogenic germs can only survive on objects such as parcels, coins and credit cards for a few hours. Products imported from China to Africa have been travelling for too long to transmit the 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.

### **Bioweapon rumours**

Just as conspiracy theories proliferated about HIV, theories surrounding the coronavirus posit that the disease is a bioweapon engineered by the Chinese government, the US government or Bill Gates’s foundation and that it was either deliberately or accidentally released. These rumours overlap with tall tales of former Soviet bloc countries supposedly carrying out secret geopolitical operations to weaken democracies via massive viral propaganda campaigns.

### **5G Conspiracy**

Based mainly on the fact that the 5G network was rolled out in the Chinese city of Wuhan just a few weeks before the coronavirus came on the scene, and that infected passengers on the Diamond Princess cruise ship had been using the technology, chat groups have been fuelling suspicion towards the electromagnetic fields (EMF) emitted by wireless communications networks.

For some, 5G is the source of the virus while, for others, COVID-19 is actually as harmless as the common cold but is being used to cover up the outbreak of other diseases.

## **Vaccines aren't being tested on Africans first**

There are widely-shared social media posts claiming that African people are to be used as guinea pigs to test a new coronavirus vaccine.

However, such claims are false - there is no vaccine for Covid-19 and only a number of clinical trials are taking place, none of them currently in African countries.

This erupted on social media again after an interview featuring two French scientists on 1 April went viral and they were accused of calling for a vaccine to be tested on Africans first.

## **Shaving your beard against the virus**

An old graphic created by the US health authorities about facial hair and respirators has been used incorrectly to suggest men should shave off their beards to avoid catching the coronavirus.

The Nigerian Punch newspaper's headline said: "To be safe from coronavirus, shave your beard, CDC warns"

Now these are the few fake care remedies that have surfaced:

* Garlic
* Drinking hot water to kill the virus before it gets to the lungs
* Drinking black tea