

Name : MENIONYEWIE GLORY ADA

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Topic

Social media and proliferation of fake news, dodgy advice and false cure of covid-19.

Abstract.

At the beginning of the pandemic many would have thought that the Covid-19 (SARs and MERs) infection will only take just few weeks to battle , but as the day goes by the disease continue to spread like a wide fire in California and along side misinformation about the knowledge of the pandemic .

INTRODUCTION

Misinformation could be an honest mistake or the intentions are not to blatantly mislead people,” like advising others to eat garlic or gargle with salt water as protection against COVID-19.

When a disease outbreak grabs the public’s attention, formal recommendations from medical experts are often muffled by a barrage of half-baked advice, sketchy remedies, and misguided theories that circulate as anxious people rush to understand a new health risk.

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Social media has added to the problem, analysts say. At many major news outlets, reporters and editors with no medical or public health training were reassigned to cover the unfolding pandemic and are scrambling to get up to speed with complex scientific terminology, methodologies, and research, and then identify, as well as vet, a roster of credible sources. Because many are not yet knowledgeable enough to report critically and authoritatively on the science, they can sometimes lean too heavily on traditional journalism values like balance, novelty, and conflict. In doing so, they lift up outlier and inaccurate counterarguments and hypotheses, unnecessarily muddying the water. The sheer volume of COVID-19 misinformation and disinformation online is “crowding out” the accurate public health guidance. Widely circulated posts on social media have made many unfounded claims of methods against coronavirus. Some of these claims are scams, and some promoted methods are dangerous and unhealthy.

Hospital conditions

Some conservative figures (such as Richard Epstein in the United States downplayed the scale of the pandemic, saying it has been exaggerated as part of an effort to hurt President Trump. Some people pointed to empty hospital parking lots as evidence that the virus has been exaggerated. Despite the empty parking lots, many hospitals in New York City and other places experienced thousands of COVID-19-related hospitalizations.

Herbal treatments

Various national and party-held Chinese media heavily advertised an "overnight research" report by Wuhan Institute of Virology and Shanghai Institute of Materia Medica, Chinese Academy of Sciences, on how shuanghuanglian, an herb mixture from traditional Chinese medicine (TCM), can effectively inhibit the novel coronavirus. The report led to a purchase craze of shuanghuanglian.

The president of Madagascar Andry Rajoelina launched and promoted in April 2020 a herbal drink based on an artemisia plant as a miracle cure that can treat and prevent COVID-19 despite a lack of medical evidence. The drink has been exported to other African countries.

Vitamin D

Claims that Vitamin D pills could help prevent the coronavirus circulated on social media in Thailand.[331] The Centre for Evidence-Based Medicine, while noting that "current advice is that the whole population of the UK should take vitamin D supplements to prevent vitamin D deficiency", found "no clinical evidence that vitamin D supplements are beneficial in preventing or treating COVID-19".

Common cold and flu treatments

There were also claims that a 30-year-old Indian textbook lists aspirin, anti-histamines and nasal spray as treatments for COVID-19. The textbook actually talks about coronaviruses in general, as a family of viruses.[333]

A rumor circulated on social media posts on Weibo, Facebook and Twitter claiming that Chinese experts said saline solutions could kill the

coronavirus. There is no evidence that saline solutions have such an effect.[334]

A tweet from French health minister Olivier Véran, a bulletin from the French health ministry, and a small speculative study in *The Lancet Respiratory Medicine* raised concerns about ibuprofen worsening COVID-19, which spread extensively on social media. The European Medicines Agency and the World Health Organization recommended COVID-19 patients keep taking ibuprofen as directed, citing lack of convincing evidence of any danger.

Animal-based products or foods

Political activist Swami Chakrapani and Member of the Legislative Assembly Suman Haripriya claimed that drinking cow urine and applying cow dung on the body can cure COVID-19. WHO's chief scientist Soumya Swaminathan criticized politicians incautiously spreading such misinformation without an evidence base.

Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) prescriptions

Since its third version, the COVID management guidelines from the Chinese National Health Commission recommends using Traditional Chinese Medicines to treat the disease.[In Wuhan, the local authorities have pushed for a set of TCM prescriptions to be used for every case since early February. One formula was promoted at the national level by mid-February. The local field hospitals were explicitly TCM-oriented. According to state-owned media, as of 16 March 2020, 91.91% of all Hubei patients have used TCM, with the rate reaching 99% in field hospitals and 94% in bulk quarantine areas.

Chloroquine

There were claims that chloroquine was used to cure more than 12,000 COVID-19 patients in Nigeria.

On 11 March 2020 . Adrian Bye, a tech startup leader who is not a doctor, suggested to cryptocurrency investors Gregory Rigano and James Todaro that "Chloroquine will keep most people out of hospital." (Bye later admit)

Other remedy include the use of Panadol, Vitamin C (bioflavoniods). All these remedies have all been swept under the rug of false treatment of covid-19 , as we continue to hope for a better drug to end the pandemic and the reopening of schools.