

# Twitter's role in combating vaccine misinformation: New study highlights importance of influential users

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A new study published in the *Journal of Medical Internet Research* sheds light on the role of Twitter in combating vaccine misinformation and

conspiracy theories. The study, titled "Twitter's Role in Combating the Magnetic Vaccine Conspiracy Theory: Social Network Analysis of Tweets," was conducted by a team of researchers led by Dr. Wasim Ahmed and aimed to identify key opinion leaders and accounts sharing the conspiracy on Twitter.

The study examined Twitter posts related to the magnetic vaccine conspiracy theory—a false claim that COVID-19 vaccines can magnetize people, which has amplified vaccination skepticism globally. An approach called [social network analysis](#) was used to identify top Twitter influencers who broadcasted against the conspiracy and helped shape the narrative for the wider community.

Dr. Ahmed and team retrieved 18,706 tweets containing the keywords "vaccine magnetic" that were posted between June 1 and June 13, 2021. They also found a total of 22,762 "connections" (including mentions and replies) between Twitter users within their data set.

Interestingly, the researchers found that the discussion revolved around only a handful of key influential Twitter users, including a North America-based news account reporting on the conspiracy, an epidemiologist, a health economist, and a former sports athlete. These influencers had a wide reach beyond their own Twitter followers and were effective in countering the misinformation and promoting accurate information about vaccines.

Social media influencers can use their [social capital](#) to challenge the spread of [conspiracy theories](#) and misinformation. The researchers highlight the need for trust in influencers with regard to [health information](#), particularly during times of social uncertainty, such as the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

The findings of this study have the potential to inform strategies for

monitoring public health trends online and countering vaccine misinformation on social media.

**More information:** Wasim Ahmed et al, Twitter's Role in Combating the Magnetic Vaccine Conspiracy Theory: Social Network Analysis of Tweets, *Journal of Medical Internet Research* (2023). [DOI: 10.2196/43497](https://doi.org/10.2196/43497)

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