

Fighting COVID-19 misinformation

September 16 2021



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With the recent surge of COVID-19 cases nationwide, two public health experts and associate professors at The University of Texas at Arlington's College of Nursing and Health Innovation are highlighting the importance of access to evidence-based information and appropriate tools to fight the virus.

Becky Garner is director of undergraduate public health programs at UT

Arlington. Erin Carlson directs the graduate public health programs. Both shared their expertise and concerns about [misinformation](#), [disinformation](#) and how to identify and push back on [false information](#).

Q: What's the difference between misinformation and disinformation?

Carlson: Misinformation is false, inaccurate or out of context information presented as facts, with or without an intention to mislead. Disinformation is intentionally false and intended to purposely deceive or mislead.

However, both have something in common. They involve the sharing of false or debunked information.

Q: Why are misinformation and disinformation so dangerous?

Garner: I think the World Health Organization said it best, "Acting on the wrong information can kill." Having the wrong information can lead to poor decision-making, which can affect not only you, but those around you.

Unfortunately, bad information spreads fast and can lead to doubt. Doubt fuels skepticism and mistrust, and we've seen how that can lead to the dismissal of proven public health measures like mask wearing and vaccination.

Q: Where should we look for trusted sources of information?

Carlson: There are lots of trusted sources. The World Health Organization will not steer you wrong. I have profound faith in the

World Health Organization and the information it puts out. Another source of trusted information is the National Institutes of Health. You also can trust the [information](#) that UTA is putting out on its COVID-19 website.

If you have an underlying [health condition](#), that means there's probably a national association for that health condition. You can trust what they put out.

Make sure you have facts. Base your opinion on facts. We're all entitled to opinions. But in [health](#), we need to base those opinions on facts and on science.

Q: There is a lot of misinformation and disinformation related to COVID-19 vaccines. What would you tell those who are vaccine hesitant?

Carlson: Before COVID, mRNA [vaccine](#) technology was already available. We just hadn't had the need to deploy it yet.

It is possible to make effective vaccines quickly and safely when you pull every brilliant mind available off everything else to focus on the problem at hand—COVID in this case.

No corners were cut. The vaccines still went through all the protocols that any vaccine would normally go through, making it reliable and safe.

Q: Why is getting vaccinated important?

Garner: Waiting too long to be vaccinated allows the coronavirus to continue spreading with new variants emerging. That's why everyone eligible should get vaccinated. It's imperative for the safety of our

community. The more people who are vaccinated, the quicker we will stop this virus.

The bottom line: The sooner you get vaccinated, the sooner you and your loved ones will be protected. There is no doubt: You should get vaccinated.

Provided by University of Texas at Arlington

Citation: Fighting COVID-19 misinformation (2021, September 16) retrieved 19 September 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2021-09-covid-misinformation.html>

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