

COVID-19 Vaccination Campaign: Fake News Infodemic

Mercedes Neto¹

ORCID: 0000-0001-7529-9535



Sheila Aparecida Ferreira Lachtim^{II}

ORCID: 0000-0002-3323-5776



¹Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro. Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

^{II}Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais. Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais, Brazil.

How to cite this article:

Neto M, Lachtim SAF. COVID-19 Vaccination Campaign: Fake News Infodemic. Rev Bras Enferm.2022;75(4):e750401. <https://doi.org/10.1590/0034-7167.2022750401>

Corresponding author:

Mercedes Neto
E-mail: mercedesneto.uerj@gmail.com

Globalization has reached the 21st century in the same harmony and dissemination as social networks, similar or correlated with the digital/virtual world as a source of information and advice on Brazilian and international public health. Therefore, people contaminated the cybernetic communication process with various information, true and/or false, causing what is known today as infodemic.

Fake news harms human beings and causes harm to the population, especially in decision-making in the field of health. These are considered a problem of mounting. They are information emitted from a means of communication, when they are transmitted in the wrong way, and may be quasi-true or even true, but distorted. This, applied to the pandemic, in the present time, installed dread, fear, anguish and other feelings and emotions, in the sense of people's psycho-emotional imbalance, aggravated by diverse information when putting science in check⁽¹⁾.

On this informative seesaw, the COVID-19 vaccination campaign was installed, which was packed with guidelines crossed with pseudo-information about immunobiological agents. This implied truncated and misleading information involving the vaccine, from xenophobic prejudices in relation to the immunizer produced in China to the presence of a chip implanted by the United States for human monitoring, having the effect of vaccine hesitancy and even the anti-vaccine movement.

Vaccination hesitation is a complex process mediated by political and sociocultural aspects and issues. It is characterized by the doubt in accepting the immunobiological agent, when questioning vaccine efficacy and safety. This led to doubts, questions with an effect of insecurity for the population, leading to the acceptance of the population to be immunized against COVID-19⁽²⁾.

It is worth mentioning that health professionals should pay attention to the content they share on social media, so as not to run the risk of endorsing fake news, just as the pandemic revealed the relationship between social inequalities and physical and mental illness. Moreover, it brought to light the problem that, in Brazil, only scholars on the subject had been discussing, for instance, the drop in vaccination coverage, observed since 2016, which allowed the resurgence of measles.

Under this logic, it is noteworthy that Brazil has been receiving and consuming fake news about vaccines for many years, with historical milestones that prove human failures in communication in the health sector, with effects on research institutions and the population. Thus, we cannot fail to mention, historiographically, the Vaccine Revolt (1904), which led people to go against the vaccine, causing several hospitalizations and deaths due to smallpox.

The smallpox vaccine was considered weird, as a person was inoculated with a liquid from pustules from sick cows, despite the benefits of it being publicized with general access for free. Its diffusion at the time was that whoever was vaccinated would have bovine features.

Dear readers, this is nothing different from what we have heard and seen on social media about the COVID-19 vaccine, in addition to the aggravating factor of what was verbalized by the president of the republic, in

approximate words, whoever accepted to be vaccinated should be careful not to become alligators. Regarding the political strategy against vaccination, we believe in the implantation of a culture of ignorance and aversion to what is scientific endorsed by the World Health Organization (WHO).

It is important to emphasize the need for mechanisms to curb the use of algorithms and bots that drive such news, which are true factories of fake news. In this sense, social media companies have established partnerships with fact checking agencies to reduce their circulation in the content shared on their networks, by limiting the possibility of retransmission to many groups in the communication application.

Currently, there are numerous bills in progress that discuss the subject, from changes in the Federal Constitution to digital

literacy and criminalization of pseudo-information fosters. That said, the broad and democratic social debate of these projects is important.

Brazilian nursing found itself at the front of a war, not only against the disease, through bedside care, but also in the fight against fake news, which hinder actions to prevent this disease, such as vaccination. The work has been tireless for the country to reach maximum COVID-19 vaccine coverage. The struggle to reverse vaccine hesitancy takes place in every mind and arm vaccinated by Brazilian nursing. Anyway, we have the confidence that the vaccine apotheosis will occur so that we can return to hugs and sociocultural life, with the heat of applause at the end, because we believe that the world turns and turns, because we are Brazilians.

REFERENCES

1. Neto M, Gomes TO, Porto FRP, Rafael RMR, Fonseca HS, Nascimento J. Fake news no cenário da pandemia de covid-19. *Cogitare Enferm.* 2020;25(72627)1-7. <https://doi.org/10.5380/ce.v25i0.72627>
2. Frugoli AG, Prado RS, Silva TRM, Matozinhos FP, Trape CA, Lachtim SAF. Fake news sobre vacinas: uma análise sob o modelo dos 3C's da Organização Mundial de Saúde. *Rev Esc Enferm USP.* 2021;55:e03736. <https://doi.org/10.1590/S1980-220X2020028303736>