

Be a Vaccine Warrior: Spread the Truth

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Objectives

1. Describe the impact of the internet/social network on vaccination
2. Describe the importance of risk communication and how it can mitigate vaccine misinformation
3. Provide examples on how to optimize use of social media to support immunization advocacy

Antivaccine propaganda history

- Antivaxxers present since the 18th century
- Reverend Edmund Massey in England called the vaccines “diabolical operations” in his 1772 sermon, “The Dangerous and Sinful Practice of Inoculation”
- He decried these vaccines as an attempt to oppose God’s punishments upon man for his sins

Early vaccine problems

- In 1959, researchers discovered that infectious SV₄₀ had been contaminating the Salk vaccine and early batches of OPV that had been given to more than 100 million people worldwide between 1954 and 1961; in the past decade scientists have confirmed that some of the Sabin polio vaccine seed stocks were contaminated with infectious SV₄₀ until at least 1978
- Some British parents refused to vaccinate their children in the 1970s and 1980s against pertussis in response to the publication of a report in 1974 that credited 36 negative neurological reactions to the whole-cell pertussis vaccine

Andrew Wakefield

- Published Lancet paper in 1998 claiming a possible link between MMR vaccination and autism
- The paper said that no causal connection had been proven, but Wakefield called for suspension of the triple MMR vaccine until more research could be done at a press conference and in a video news release
- Partially retracted by Lancet in 2004, fully retracted in 2010 when evidence of major ethical breach and conflict of interest surfaced

Internet and Social Media

- Internet and Social Media inherently democratic
- Everyone has an equal platform
- No editorial control on content, less censorship
- “Alternative” and conspiracy theories abound
- Very easy to “share” and become “viral”
- Can be unduly influenced by “troll farms” and spam networks

Vaccination and the Internet

- Analysis of YouTube videos about immunization found that 32% opposed vaccination and that these had higher ratings and more views than pro-vaccine videos
- Analysis of MySpace blogs about HPV immunization found that 43% portrayed the immunization in a negative light; these blogs referenced vaccine-critical organizations and cited inaccurate data

Vaccination and the Internet

- Study of Canadian internet users tracked the sharing of influenza vaccine information on social media networks, such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Digg. Of the top search results during the study period, 60% promoted anti-vaccination sentiments.
- A study that examined the content of the first 100 anti-vaccination sites found after searching for “vaccination” and “immunization” on Google concluded that 43% of websites were anti-vaccination (including all of the first ten)

Anti-vaccine tactics on the web

- skewing science
- shifting hypotheses
- censoring opposition
- attacking critics
- claiming to be “pro-safe vaccines”, and not “anti-vaccine”
- claiming that vaccines are toxic or unnatural

Facebook

Older people more likely to share fake news on Facebook, study finds

Researchers suggest over-65s may lack skills to determine veracity of online news

Alex Hern

🐦 @alexhern

Thu 10 Jan 2019
11.54 GMT



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▲ US Facebook users shared seven times as many fake news articles as those aged 18-29, the study found.
Photograph: Veryan Dale/Alamy

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independently
Read the

The
Guardian

Fighting Back

- The Internet is a double-edged sword – can be used to fight back
- Need to learn how to use it! Sign up on Twitter, FB, Instagram etc.
- Understand how to spot fake news – Snopes.com can help verify
- Think before you click, check before you share
- **Report fake news!**
- **Put pressure on social media providers to be accountable!**

Early Pushback (2015)

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IDEAS • HEALTH

Facebook Must Shut Down the Anti-Vaxxers



Prove it: Silencing the anti-vaccine crowd can save a lot of lives Justin Sullivan; Getty Images

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Facebook to tackle 'anti-vaxxers': Social media giant says it may 'reduce or remove' harmful posts about vaccinations as WHO says misinformation is to blame for global surge in measles

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FEBRUARY 12, 2019 BY KATIE JOY 22 COMMENTS

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Influencing outcomes

- Advocates need to become science-literate
- Scientists need to become advocacy-literate
- Advocates can easily be flustered when dealing with well-read antivaxxers
- Scientist unable to explain well and can be drowned out by much clearer messaging by antivaxxers

Risk Communication

- Help people understand that science and medicine is NOT absolute
- Messaging to reflect risk-benefit
- Provide easy-to-understand examples: risk of getting hit by lightning (1 in 1 million) for example for getting a severe side effect, versus a much bigger chance (90%) of being protected from measles when explaining measles vaccination
- Help people think like a scientist – verify facts, and a skeptical attitude towards general, sweeping and sensational statements
- Check reputable sources for information

Advance vaccine warrior 101

- Challenge trolls on Facebook – easier said than done, and can lead to “troll” frenzy but stand your ground if necessary
 - if it’s your post, you can delete or block unrelated and ad hominem material
 - if you are a content expert, ask them about their credentials while giving yours
 - never lose your temper and stick to your guns as long as you are sure of your facts
- Don’t waste too much time with trolls who are not making sense – block or state your case and leave; better to explain to people with an open mind

Advance vaccine warrior 101

- Make your own content! The best journalists are still not doctors. If you are a decent writer, be brave and send articles to newspapers and magazines!



Say YES to interviews and press cons

network before you can access the Internet. Open

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FRONT PAGE NEWS

Dengue mass vaccination 'not that bad a situation' — expert

By CNN Philippines Staff

Updated 22:34 PM PHT Mon, December 4, 2017

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Infectious disease physician Dr. Edcel Maurice Savaña told CNN Philippines there is public confusion about the nature of Dengvaxia.

Metro Manila (CNN Philippines, December 4) — The issue on the controversial anti-dengue vaccine is not as bad as people believe it is, an expert claimed Monday.

"I don't think it's that bad a situation because 730,000 children were given this vaccine

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Harness Social Media

- Post about the benefits of vaccines
- Debunk anti-vaxxer propaganda
- Be vigilant against fake news and impersonators
- Keep an open attitude and never lose your temper
- Use high impact messaging with pictures!



Edsel Maurice Salvana

February 18 at 9:24 AM · 🌐 ▼

If you EVER doubt the efficacy of vaccines and whether the benefit far outweighs the risk, take it from me, an infectious diseases physician. I kill bacteria and viruses (and other scary things) for a living. This picture shows SMALLPOX, something I (AND YOU) will NEVER have to deal with, THANKS TO VACCINES. Vaccination works. Get your effing shot.
[#vaccineswork](#) [#neverforget](#)



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Summary

- Vaccine confidence is under threat, and we need to harness all our resources to counter these threats
- Social media has been used by the anti-vaccine movement as a potent weapon; we need to use those same tools to fight back, and promote and reinforce how important vaccines are to health
- Reclaim writing and media skills, defend vaccines in social media, tell the TRUTH and save lives

Thank you!



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