

**WEBINAR**

**Personal Responsibility Education Program**



**FYSB** Family & Youth  
Services Bureau

Adolescent Pregnancy  
Prevention Program



# Misinformation and Public Health: Implications for Personal Responsibility Education Program Grantees

November 17, 2022

Brian Southwell, PhD, RTI International

# Agenda

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Welcome and Introductions

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Objectives

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Background and History

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Why is misinformation so compelling?

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What can be done about misinformation?

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Questions & Answers

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Reflection

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Closing Remarks

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# Objectives

By the end of this webinar, participants will be able to:

- Define misinformation and its impact on public health;
- Describe two reasons why misinformation about PREP programming is easily spread through communities; and
- Identify at least two strategies to address misinformation in your community.

- 
- + • *Have you ever encountered misinformation that has complicated your work?*

- 

*Have you ever received formal training on handling misinformation?*



How did we get here?

*A short history of thinking  
about misinformation*



The background of the central panel features a large, faint, circular seal of the U.S. Surgeon General. The seal contains the text "DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES" around the top edge, "U.S. SURGEON GENERAL" around the bottom edge, and the year "1798" at the very bottom. In the center of the seal is a caduceus (a staff with two snakes and wings) and a shield.

# CONFRONTING HEALTH MISINFORMATION

*The U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory on  
Building a Healthy Information Environment*

2021

# Word of the year: misinformation. Here's why.



Dictionary.com

Thesaurus.com



definitions ▾

misinformation



## misinformation

[mis-in-fer-mey-shuhn]

[Synonyms](#) [Examples](#) [Word Origin](#)

[See more synonyms for misinformation on Thesaurus.com](#)

noun

1. false information that is spread, regardless of whether there is intent to mislead:

In the chaotic hours after the earthquake, a lot of misinformation was reported in the news.

An image from Dictionary.com shows an entry for the word misinformation, which Dictionary.com announced as its 2018 Word of the Year. (Dictionary.com via AP)

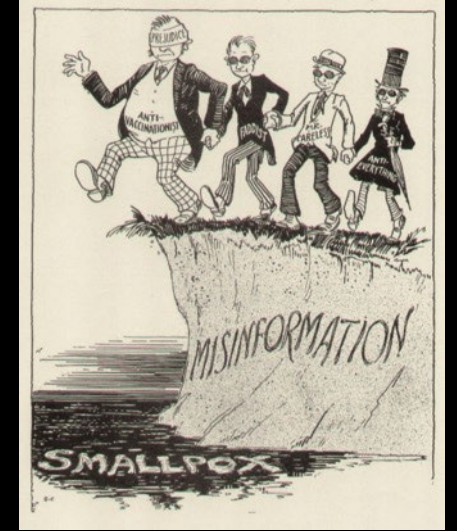


By **Valerie Strauss**

December 10, 2018

**The Washington Post**  
*Democracy Dies in Darkness*

Misinformation  
is not new.



A Guaranteed CURE  
FOR  
RHEUMATISM  
WHETHER  
ACUTE, CHRONIC,  
SCIATIC, NEURALGIC  
OR  
INFLAMMATORY  
50c a Bottle.



PREPARED FROM PURE  
RATTLESNAKE OIL.

THE ONLY COMPANY IN  
THE UNITED STATES  
THAT MAKES THE  
**GENUINE  
ARTICLE.**  
50c a Bottle.

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**SNAKE-OIL LINIMENT**





AJPM American Journal of Preventive Medicine **ACPM** **APTR**

CURRENT ISSUES | VOLUME 57, ISSUE 2, P282-285, AUGUST 01, 2019

Misinformation as a Misunderstood Challenge to Public Health

Brian G. Southwell, PhD • Jeff Niederdeppe, PhD • Joseph N. Cappella, PhD • ... April Oh, PhD • Emily B. Peterson, PhD • Wen-Ying Sylvia Chou, PhD • Show all authors

Published: June 24, 2019 • DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amepre.2019.03.009> • Check for updates

Are we approaching misinformation in the most useful way?

Simply *tracking* misinformation might not sufficiently explain and explore context.

“Misinformation” is not exactly a novel virus.

October 2021 *NBC News* headline:

*“Latinos more likely to get, consume and share online misinformation, fake news”*

## Fast rollout of virus vaccine trials reveals tribal distrust

By FELICIA FONSECA January 4, 2021



FLAGSTAFF, Ariz. (AP) — The news came during a hopeful time on the largest Native American reservation.

# Examining Facebook Community Reaction to a COVID-19 Vaccine Trial on the Navajo Nation

Alec J. Calac, BS, Cortni Bardier, MA, BA, Mingxiang Cai, MS, and Tim K. Mackey, PhD, MAS

### ABOUT THE AUTHORS

All authors are with the University of California, San Diego, La Jolla. Alec Calac is also with the Joint Doctoral Program in Global Public Health, University of California, San Diego School of Medicine. Cortni Bardier, Mingxiang Cai, and Tim K. Mackey are also with the Global Health Policy and Data Institute, San Diego, CA.

# What is scientific misinformation?

“Publicly available information that is misleading or deceptive relative to best available evidence at the time and counters statements by actors who adhere to scientific principles without adding accurate evidence for consideration

(Southwell et al. for *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*)

- 
- +
    - *Chat: What examples of misinformation about PREP programming or sex education in general have you encountered in your work?*

+  
•  
○

Why is misinformation so compelling?

Why is misinformation a persistent dilemma?

+  
•  
○

# What's the problem?

- We are biased toward acceptance.
- There are reasons why we share misinformation.
- Our regulatory approach (in democracies) emphasizes post hoc detection.
- Correction is hard.

## News & Analysis

### Medical News & Perspectives

## COVID-19 Conspiracies and Beyond: How Physicians Can Deal With Patients' Misinformation

Jennifer Abbasi

Early in 2020, communication science expert Brian Southwell, PhD, launched a [training workshop](#) at the Duke University School of Medicine to address a major clinical problem: What physicians should do when patients are misinformed about their health. It's one of only a few such programs in the nation. This year, Southwell, a scholar with the medical school's Social Science Research Institute, and his collaborator Jamie Wood, PhD, plan to make it available as a live virtual offering for clinician practices and health care systems.

"There's a lot that we can learn from the past in terms of how people have engaged with misinformation historically," Southwell said in a recent interview with *JAMA*. "That's going to be helpful, but we also need to think about some of the challenges of the moment." Misinformation is



Graphic: Abbasi (2020) in *JAMA*

<https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/fullarticle/2774709>

# Was Spinoza right?



Descartes and Spinoza image sources: Encyclopædia Britannica and biography.com



# Might emotions make us vulnerable?

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- Yes.
- Example: anger encourages inaccurate information acceptance.

Weeks, B. E. (2015). Emotions, partisanship, and misperceptions: how anger and anxiety moderate the effect of partisan bias on susceptibility to political misinformation. *Journal of Communication*, 65, 699-719.



# BELLE GIBSON

FOUNDER OF THE BEST-SELLING APP AND  
COOKBOOK *THE WHOLE PANTRY*

## My life-long struggle with the truth

Belle Gibson claimed to be healing her terminal cancer with wholefoods – but now it's proven to be a cruel web of lies.

Yet is Belle a hoax mastermind or simply

**F**RESH-FACED. EARNEST. Naive. When Belle Gibson speaks, she cries easily and muddles her words. She's passionate about avoiding gluten, dairy and coffee, but doesn't really understand how cancer works. All of which begs the question: is this young woman really capable of masterminding one of the



• Image: *The Australian Women's Weekly*

*Do we misunderstand  
our own  
vulnerabilities?*



We need social connection.



We need hope for future.



Without either, expect  
misinformation diffusion if  
misinformation offers salve.

- 
- +
    - *Chat: What are some reasons why you have not been able to address misinformation in your community?*
    -



# What can be done about misinformation?



# Emerging literature on misinformation

*Why does misinformation spread?*

*How do we stop people from sharing misinformation?*

*How can we mitigate effects?*

ARTICLE IN PRESS

Available online at [www.sciencedirect.com](http://www.sciencedirect.com)

ScienceDirect  
Research in Social and Administrative Pharmacy ■ (2016) ■ ■ ■

ELSEVIER

RESEARCH IN SOCIAL & ADMINISTRATIVE PHARMACY

Original Research

Correction of misleading information in prescription drug television advertising: The roles of advertisement similarity and time delay

Kathryn J. Aikin, Ph.D.<sup>a,\*</sup>, Brian G. Southwell, Ph.D.<sup>b</sup>, Ryan S. Paquin, Ph.D.<sup>b</sup>, Douglas J. Rupert, M.P.H.<sup>b</sup>, Amie C. O'Donoghue, Ph.D.<sup>a</sup>, Kevin R. Betts, Ph.D.<sup>a</sup>, Philip K. Lee, B.S.<sup>b</sup>

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JOURNAL OF COMMUNICATION

Journal of Communication ISSN 0021-5097

EDITORIAL

The Prevalence, Consequence, and Remedy of Misinformation in Mass Media Systems

Brian G. Southwell<sup>1,2,3</sup> & Emily A. Thorson<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Department of Communication, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, NC 27599, USA  
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<sup>4</sup>Department of Communication, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, NC 27599, USA

UNDERSTANDING AND ADDRESSING THE DISINFORMATION ECOSYSTEM

DECEMBER 15-16, 2017  
ANNENBERG SCHOOL FOR COMMUNICATION

Annenberg COMMUNICATION UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA  
FIRST DRAFT  
KNIGHT FOUNDATION

## TWO Awareness of Misinformation in Health-Related Advertising

A Narrative Review of the Literature  
VANESSA BOUDEWYNS, BRIAN G. SOUTHWELL, KEVIN R. BETTS, CATHERINE SLOTA GUPTA, RYAN S. PAQUIN, AMIE C. O'DONOGHUE, AND NATASHA VAZQUEZ

Health-related advertisements, such as direct-to-consumer (DTC) and direct-to-physician (DTP) advertisements for prescription drugs, are a consequential source of information for consumers and physicians alike. Ideally, information provided in advertisements should be of high quality to support consumers and health care providers (HCPs) in making informed, evidence-based decisions. This information should contain no false or misleading claims in text, graphics, or any other format. Critically, this is not always the case. In regard to prescription drug advertising, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) frequently issues compliance letters (C-letters) to drug manufacturers regarding issues such as misleading claims, unsubstantiated claims, and other issues (FDA, 2004, 2009). Misleading claims are defined as any claim that is false, deceptive, or misleading in any manner. Misleading claims can be intentional or unintentional. Interest in long history of false or misleading information in health-related advertising is growing.

SOCIAL NETWORKS and POPULAR UNDERSTANDING of SCIENCE and HEALTH SHARING DISPARITIES

BRIAN G. SOUTHWELL

MISINFORMATION AND MASS AUDIENCES

EDITED BY BRIAN SOUTHWELL, EMILY THORSON, AND LAURA SHEBLE



# Health Misinformation Exposure and Health Disparities: Observations and Opportunities

Southwell, Otero Machuca,  
Cherry, Burnside, & Barrett



We need more focus on building trust and less on blaming those who do not trust us.



## ***What can be done?***

Encourage compassion

Embrace translation opportunities

Learn what people are encountering

Empower information seeking



# Beyond fact checking: Addressing misinformation



RTI Press

Conference Proceedings

December 2018

# Curbing the Spread of Misinformation

Insights, Innovations, and  
Interpretations from the  
Misinformation Solutions Forum

Brian G. Southwell and Vanessa Boudewyns, Editors





Four suggestions from the *Trust in Science* summit:

**Promote open science.**

**Equip audiences** for critical inquiry and search.

**Educate scientists** to become better communicators.

**Collaborate** to address misinformation.



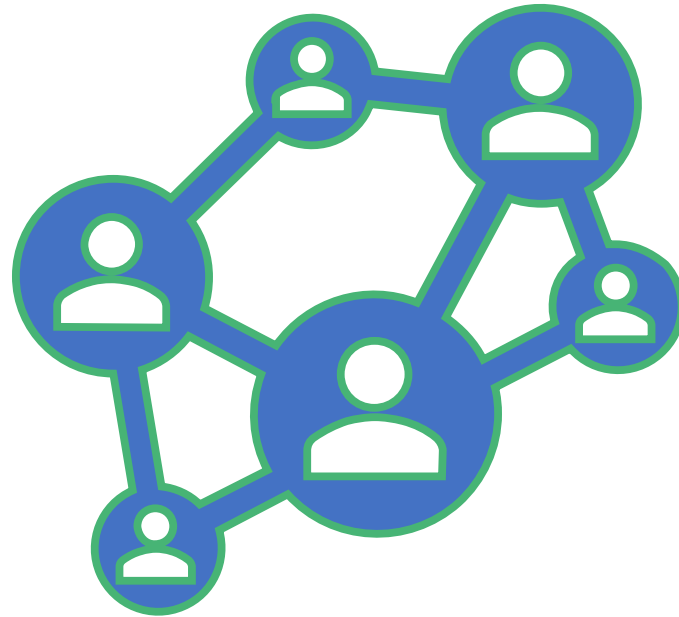
# What is *trust* ?

Perception of credibility

Perception of reliability

Perception of shared interest

What can we do to *identify and uplift shared interests* between organizations and people outside those organizations?



What can *healthcare and public health professionals* do about misinformation?



# A need for support

Journal List > Inquiry > v.58; Jan-Dec 2021 > PMC8375336

## INQUIRY

[Inquiry](#), 2021 Jan-Dec; 58: 00469580211035742.

PMCID: PMC8375336

Published online 2021 Aug 16. doi: [10.1177/00469580211035742](https://doi.org/10.1177/00469580211035742)

PMID: [34399597](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/34399597/)

### **A Pilot Study of Medical Misinformation Perceptions and Training Among Practitioners in North Carolina (USA)**

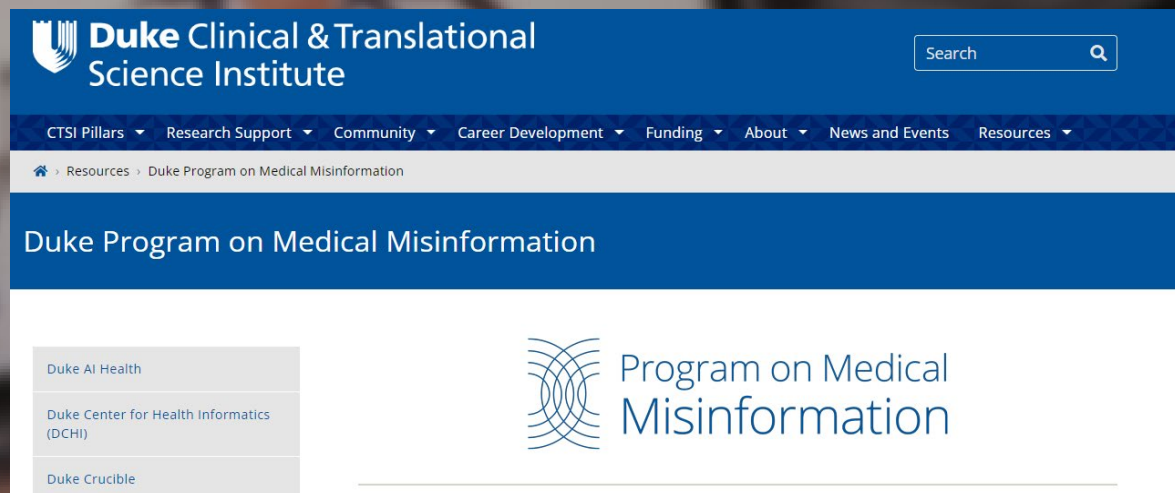
[Jamie L. Wood](#), PhD,<sup>1</sup> [Grace Y. Lee](#), MS,<sup>2</sup> [Sandra S. Stinnett](#), DrPH,<sup>3,4</sup> and [Brian G. Southwell](#), PhD<sup>5,6</sup>

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# *A Training Program for Healthcare Professionals*

<https://ctsi.duke.edu/medical-misinformation>



The screenshot displays the website for the Duke Program on Medical Misinformation. At the top, the Duke Clinical & Translational Science Institute logo is visible on the left, and a search bar is on the right. Below the logo is a navigation menu with items: CTSI Pillars, Research Support, Community, Career Development, Funding, About, News and Events, and Resources. A breadcrumb trail shows the path: Resources > Duke Program on Medical Misinformation. The main heading reads "Duke Program on Medical Misinformation". On the left side, there is a vertical list of links: Duke AI Health, Duke Center for Health Informatics (DCHI), and Duke Crucible. On the right side, the logo for the Program on Medical Misinformation is displayed, featuring a stylized circular graphic and the text "Program on Medical Misinformation".

**Duke Clinical & Translational Science Institute**

Search

CTSI Pillars Research Support Community Career Development Funding About News and Events Resources


Resources > Duke Program on Medical Misinformation

## Duke Program on Medical Misinformation

Duke AI Health

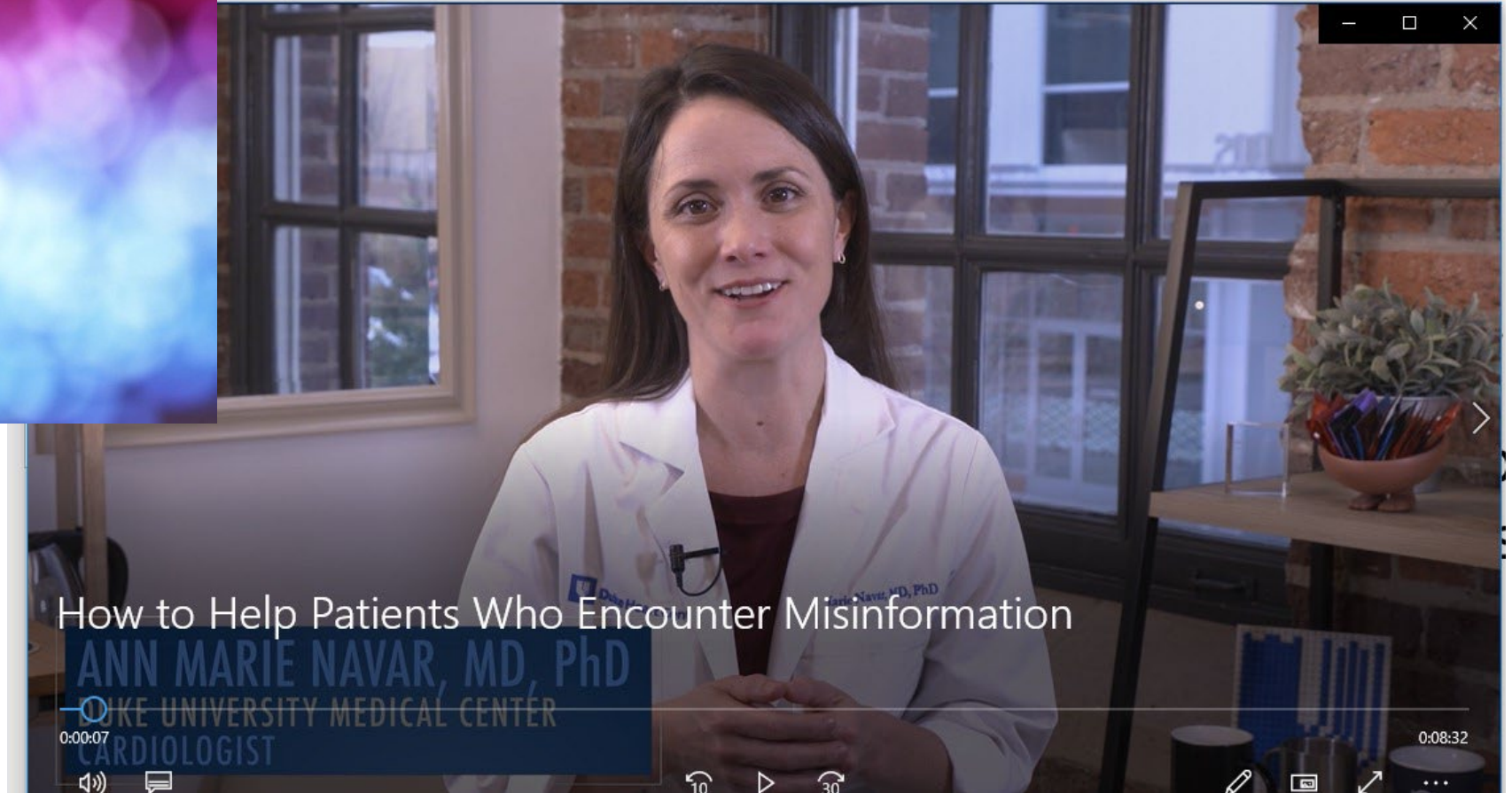
Duke Center for Health Informatics (DCHI)

Duke Crucible

 Program on Medical Misinformation

## Video: principles for talking about misinformation

[Full video: https://warpwire.duke.edu/w/OQEFAA/](https://warpwire.duke.edu/w/OQEFAA/)



Q&A with presenters

Personal reflection:  
*What strategies can  
you now use?*

Thank you!



# Resources

- Engaging Parents and Caregivers in Optimal Health Programming
- Spreading the Word About Your Program: Applying Strategies from Contagious
- Successfully Sharing Your Program: Packaging and Dissemination
- Community Saturation Toolkit: Resources for Youth-Serving Program Providers
- Effective Communication Through Data Visualization

# Let's Hear From You!

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- Please complete a short survey about your experience with today's webinar.

<https://survey.alchemer.com/s3/7078640/Webinar-Feedback-Survey-Misinformation-and-Public-Health-Implications-for-Personal-Responsibility-Education-Program-Grantees>

- If you attended the webinar with other team members, please share the link and complete the evaluation separately.



Thank you!