COVID-19 and Vaccine Misinformation Accounts on Instagram
Report for Governments and the WHO

April 20, 2021
This report features English and French Instagram accounts publishing COVID-19 and vaccine misinformation to large audiences.
This is the account of an antivax misinformation film by Andrew Wakefield. The baseless theory that vaccines cause autism was promoted most prominently by a since-retracted 1998 study by Wakefield in the medical journal The Lancet. The study sought to establish a connection between the Measles, Mumps, and Rubella (MMR) vaccine and autism. The Lancet study was retracted in 2010 after the British Medical Journal found what it described as “several elements of incorrect information.”

The Wakefield study, which only involved 12 participants, has been refuted by numerous studies since it was published. For example, the CDC states on its website, “There is no link between vaccines and autism,” citing multiple peer-reviewed studies. Wakefield was barred from practicing medicine in the U.K. in 2010.

The account also shares links to other antivax misinformation films, such as ‘Medical Racism’, produced by Robert F. Kennedy Jr.’s antivax nonprofit Children’s Health Defense.
@holistichealthandmore
220,000 followers
The National Vaccine Information Center is an independent source for information on diseases and vaccine science, policy, law and informed consent. 
vaccinefreedom
Followed by @rmpenny and @brenzapper

@vaccinefreedom
56,800 followers

nvic.org

Proceed with caution: This website severely violates basic journalistic standards.

The website for the National Vaccine Information Center, a nonprofit that has published false claims about vaccines and their health risks.

Score: 12 / 100

CREDIBILITY
- Does not repeatedly publish false content
- Gathers and presents information responsibly
- Regularly corrects or clarifies errors
- Handles the difference between news and opinion responsibly
- Avoids deceptive headlines

TRANSPARENCY
- Website discloses ownership and financing
- Clearly labels advertising
- Reveals who's in charge, including any possible conflicts of interest
- The site provides names of content creators, along with either contact or biographical information
According to Vaxxter's Facebook page, the site is owned by Dr. Sherri Tenpenny, an Ohio-based physician, through Choonadi, LLC, although this is not disclosed on the site. Tenpenny is a notable figure in the anti-vaccination movement, having published several books and frequently lecturing on the subject.

Vaxxter.com derives revenue from advertisements, affiliate marketing, and reader donations. The site also directs readers to "Dr. Tenpenny's Store," an e-commerce site selling supplements and anti-vaccine books.
The Antiscience Movement Is Escalating, Going Global and Killing Thousands

Antiscience has emerged as a dominant and highly lethal force, and one of its most dangerous strategies is to spread misinformation and sow fear among the public.

Visit the COVID-19 Information Center for vaccine resources.
@picphysicians
33,600 followers

physiciansforinformedconsent.org

Proceed with caution: This website severely violates basic journalistic standards.

A website that opposes mandatory vaccinations and publishes misleading information about the safety of vaccines, including the measles and flu vaccines.

Score: 39.5/100

CREDIBILITY

✅ Does not repeatedly publish false content

❌ Gathers and presents information responsibly

❌ Regularly corrects or clarifies errors

❌ Handles the difference between news and opinion responsibly

✅ Avoids deceptive headlines

TRANSPARENCY

❌ Website discloses ownership and financing

N/A Clearly labels advertising

❌ Reveals who's in charge, including any possible conflicts of interest

❌ The site provides names of content creators, along with other contact or biographical information
@anti.vaccines
2,190 followers

derier of basic biology: Why going to be

giving public health policy recommendations? We
deserve it and more.

Nothing compares to
the pain of childbirth,
extcept maybe listening
to Karen discuss how
much Tylenol she's been
shoving down her recently
vaccinated child's throat.

IF A VACCINE STUDY IS
FUNDED BY THE VACCINE
MANUFACTURERS THEN
IT'S NOT REALLY
SCIENCE IS IT?

“Every time you
eat or drink, you
are either feeding
disease or fighting
This report was produced using two proprietary datasets from NewsGuard.

The *Misinformation Fingerprints* dataset, a catalogue of data about top misinformation narratives, contains related keywords and search terms for all of the top misinformation and disinformation narratives spreading online--produced using human intelligence but designed for use with AI/ML/NLP tools to identify content matching specific false claims. NewsGuard analysts used the Misinformation Fingerprints dataset to identify relevant searches related to misinformation narratives about COVID-19 and other topics.

The second dataset used was the *News Website Reliability Ratings*, which consists of credibility ratings for over 6,000 news and information website that account for 95% of online engagement with news in the U.S., U.K., France, Germany and Italy. Each site’s rating is based on nine basic, apolitical journalistic criteria. Based on the criteria, each site receives an overall designation of green (generally trustworthy) or red (generally not trustworthy) and a trust score of 0-100. NewsGuard's analyst used the News Website Reliability Ratings dataset to identify misinformation sources that appeared in the results for searches conducted as part of the analysis.

For the purposes of this analysis, we focused on searches for which the searcher’s intent could reasonably have been to search for accurate information about a topic. The analysis used the same searches across all search engines analysed to ensure parity. Examples selected for the report represent an illustrative, but by no means exhaustive, list of search results that contain misinformation sources. Both the Misinformation Fingerprints and the News Website Reliability Index are available to be licensed for research and other purposes.