

Americans must be vigilant against anti-vax rumors in 'fractured media universe'

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As the world watches how UK residents respond to COVID-19 vaccinations, three leading experts on the virus are urging Americans and the US government to be vigilant against anti-vaccination advocates and their "rumors, misinformation, and conspiracy theories in a fractured media universe."

The experts—Dr. Ali Mokdad of the Institute for Health Metrics and

Evaluation, Dr. Peter Hotez of the Baylor College of Medicine and the Texas Children's Center for Vaccine Development in Houston, and Dr. Walter Orenstein of Emory University—are calling for a national communications strategy to counter such misleading information. This strategy, they contend, demands "an unprecedented level of communication between federal agencies and the American people."

The commentary, "We have to get it right: Ensuring success," was published today in *EClinicalMedicine*, an online publication of the international medical journal *The Lancet*.

"We must recognize the pervasive aspects of anti-vaccine messaging across the internet, including [social media](#) and e-commerce platforms," the three experts write. "Anti-vaccination rumors, misinformation, and [conspiracy theories](#) swirl in a fractured media universe; their origins are diverse and include dedicated anti-vaccine organizations and political extremist groups."

In addition, they note that "a growing body of scientific literature" demonstrates that COVID-19 disproportionately affects minorities in the US, and that a "plan tailored to meet the challenges of ensuring vaccine access for these communities is imperative."

Other arguments in the commentary include:

- The need to monitor the capacity of health care systems to deliver vaccines to everyone by surveying local health departments to assess their vaccine-delivery readiness.
- Safety and efficacy of each vaccine must be "paramount." Possible side effects or [adverse reactions](#) to vaccinations need to be tracked and monitored.

Orenstein remarked that vaccines represent the best way people can

protect themselves against the deadly virus.

"Vaccines do not save lives. Vaccinations save lives," he said. "A vaccine dose that remains in the vial is zero percent effective, no matter the results of the clinical trials."

Mokdad commented that states and the US government must work effectively together on assessing the implementation of the vaccine.

"It is imperative and essential to monitor the uptake of the vaccine," he said. "We have a collective obligation to understand who is taking it, who is not, and address these gaps."

Hotez reiterated one of the commentary's key points: countering opposition to the vaccine.

"We are facing an aggressive anti-[vaccine](#) disinformation campaign," he said. "The concept of medical freedom is, quite simply, as fake as it is dangerous."

More information: *EClinicalMedicine*, [DOI: 10.1016/j.eclinm.2020.100690](#)

Provided by Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation

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