

Battling public health misinformation online

29 April 2021



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In a novel effort to combat COVID-19 misinformation, a group of women researchers, including nurse scientists from the University of Pennsylvania School of Nursing (Penn Nursing), launched the Dear Pandemic social media campaign in March 2020. It delivers curated, comprehensive, and timely information about the COVID-19 pandemic in a question-and-answer format. Complex topics such as COVID-19 aerosol transmission, risk reduction strategies to avoid infection, and excess mortality are explained in common language and shared widely.

Now with more than 100,000 followers and accounts on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, the campaign has an international and multilingual impact offering important public health insight via social media. An article in the journal *Public Health Nursing* describes how the campaign is combating misinformation about COVID-19.

"Dear Pandemic has demonstrated that consistently publishing high-quality content outside a peer-reviewed venue can result in incredible impact—personal behavior change, informed nodes of trust to further disseminate [factual information](#), and resources for community providers navigating constantly evolving knowledge," says Penn Nursing's Ashley Z. Ritter, Ph.D., CRNP, the article's lead author.

Dear Pandemic is an example of necessary low-barrier information exchange with the public and a tool for community providers like nurses to stay informed of breaking news. Increased engagement of nurses in endeavors like Dear Pandemic amplifies the impact of collective interdisciplinary efforts to educate the public, contain misinformation, and motivate individual and systemic action, the article explains.

"Now is the time for nurses to flex their communication and trust muscles in both traditional and innovative ways to advance the health of the public through trusted, actionable messaging in addition to exceptional patient care," says co-author Shoshana Aronowitz, Ph.D., CRNP, a Fellow of the National Clinician Scholars Program.

Provided by University of Pennsylvania School of Nursing

APA citation: Battling public health misinformation online (2021, April 29) retrieved 17 June 2021 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2021-04-health-misinformation-online.html>

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