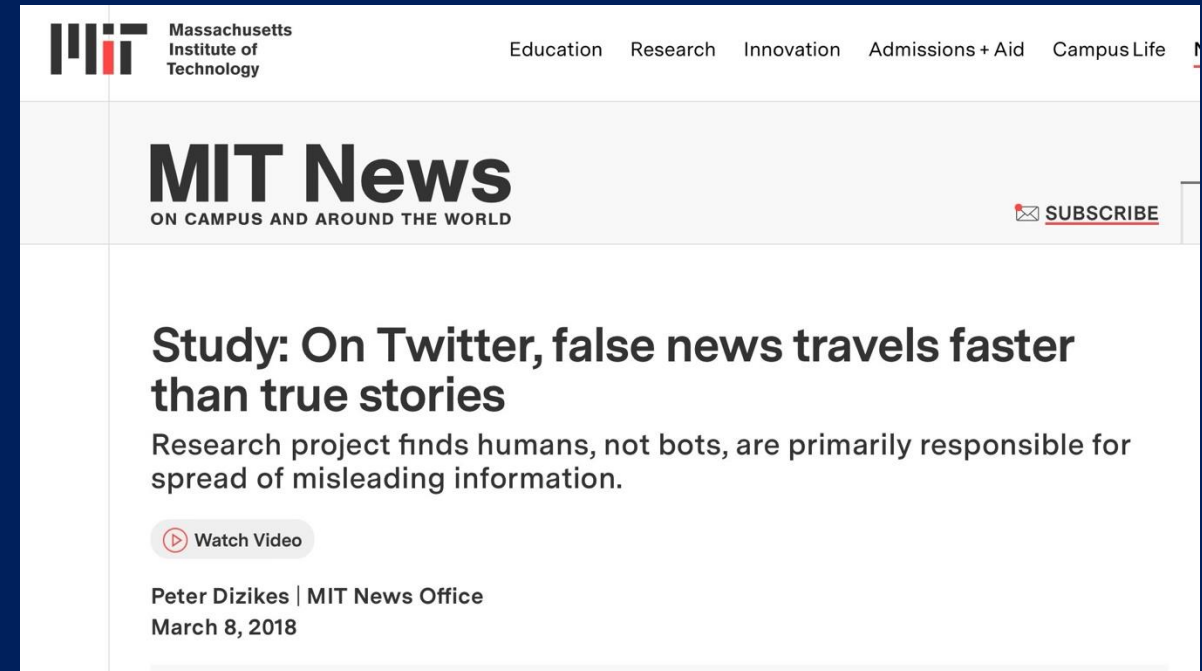


HOW TO DEAL WITH INFODEMIC AND CREATE EFFECTIVE SOLUTIONS?

Olha Izhyk,
Risk Communication &
Infodemic Management Officer,
WHO Regional Office for Europe



THE SPREAD OF FALSE INFORMATION HAS BECOME AS DANGEROUS AS THE SPREAD OF DISEASE ITSELF



A recent study shows that **even small amounts of misinformation sharply worsen a disease outbreak** because harmful beliefs spread faster and persist longer than factual guidance

NATURE

Up to half of online health content can be wrong or misleading. The review found that misinformation made up 51% of vaccine-related posts, 28.8% of COVID-19 posts, and up to 60% of posts about pandemics

WHO

LANDSCAPE OF FALSE INFO

Old narratives - new crises

Post-pandemic skepticism

“False information fatigue”

WHAT IS INFODEMIC?

“An infodemic is too much information including false or misleading information in digital and physical environments during a disease outbreak.” – WHO definition

Excess information

False or misleading information

Digital and physical environments

Acute public health event



HOW DO INFODEMICS IMPACT HEALTH?




Sections

The Washington Post
Democracy Dies in Darkness

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World

Researchers are asking why some countries were better prepared for covid. One surprising answer: Trust.



People shop at a Lunar New Year market in Hanoi on Jan. 28. (Hau Dinh/AP)

By Adam Taylor
February 1, 2022 at 6:30 p.m. EST

Before 2020, Vietnam looked particularly vulnerable to a pandemic. The Southeast Asian country, a single-party state with nearly 100 million people, scored low on international assessments of universal health coverage and had relatively few hospital beds for its population, as well as a closed-off political system.

MOST READ WORLD >

- 1 Frozen out of CoFundMe, Canadian protest convoy raises millions on Christian site
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- 4 Kyiv's question: Where to hide if war roars in?
- 5 As U.S. predicts Russia could seize Kyiv in days, diplomatic efforts set to intensify this week

“We found no links between COVID-19 outcomes and democracy, populism, government effectiveness, universal health care, pandemic preparedness metrics, economic inequality or trust in science,”...

“Instead, better outcomes appear to have gone hand in hand with high levels of trust in government and other citizens.”

TRUST IS A HEALTH DETERMINANT

When people don't trust institutions, they reject guidance, delay care, and turn to riskier behaviour

When everything is questioned, *nothing* is trusted
— including legitimate health advice.

WHAT CAN WE DO ABOUT IT?

Treatment is essential, but we have to invest more in

PREVENTION

BUILDING TRUST

PEOPLE NEED TO FEEL HEARD

Communicate honestly and transparently

Do not ignore signals that may seem small

Invest in strengthening health literacy

Develop messages based on the needs and risk perception of the audiences

Test your messages

Co-create solutions with communities

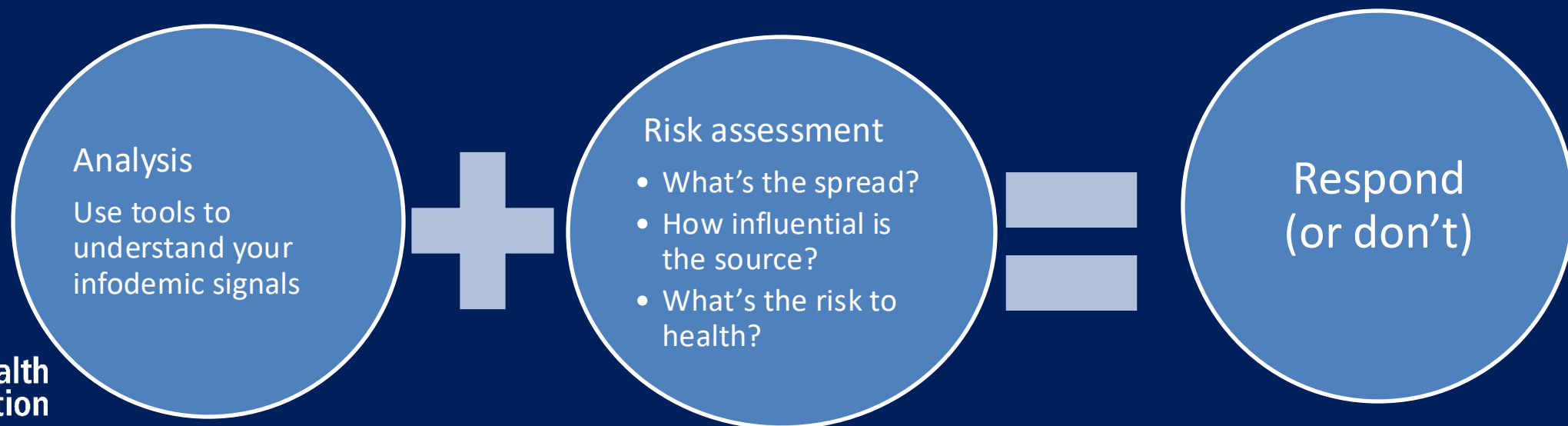
Social listening:

- ✓ Understand conversations and narratives on a public health topic
- ✓ Identify circulating false information
- ✓ Focus on online and offline information flow



UNDERSTANDING SIGNALS

- **Analysis:** to make sense of infodemic signals. Tools can help to share information, analyze text, map information flows, find influencers, and identify coordinated activity.
- **Risk assessment:** determine health risk by a signal. This assessment informs if and how we should respond.



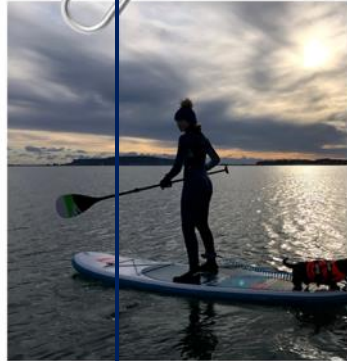
DEBUNKING

- **It works**, especially when timely and clear
- Well-designed corrections **significantly reduce belief in false claims**.
- The most effective debunks don't just say "*this is false*"; they **replace** the false story with a **coherent, factual narrative**.



Examples

Long COVID can affect anyone who had COVID, regardless of age or health.



Despite this fact, myths persist that 'being young and fit protects you from Long COVID'.

This is false.

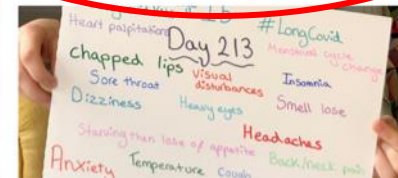


Kitty, from the UK, was a healthy, active 14-year-old who loved ballet and sports. After catching COVID in early 2020, she developed Long COVID.

Today at 19, she uses a **wheelchair** and still experiences **fatigue, chronic pain**, and episodes of **passing out**.

Believing that **certain groups are immune** relies on **wishful thinking** - it feels true because it's simple and comforting.

But this false sense of safety may lead people to **underestimate risk** and **overlook those affected**.



PREBUNKING

Preparing people to resist false information by exposing them to weakened examples and showing why they're false -

a “vaccine for the mind.”



PREBUNKING

Fact-based: correcting specific narratives

Logic-based: explaining tactics used to manipulate

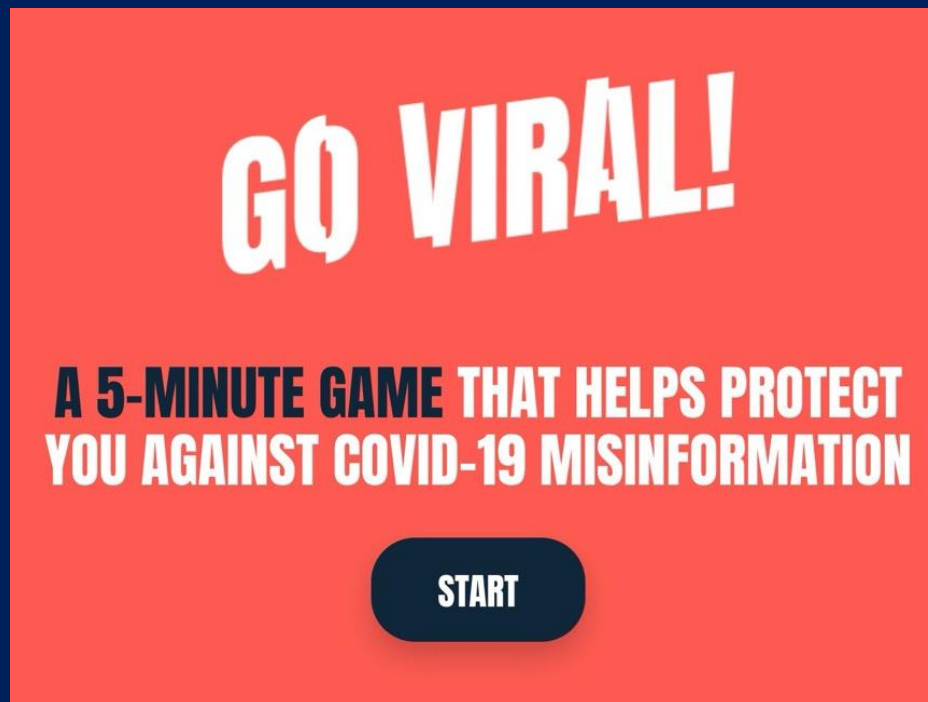
Source-based: pointing out bad sources of information

PREBUNKING

interactive games

videos

other tools and activities
that teach the tactics behind
false information



WHAT TO CHOOSE?

Prebunking

Prevents misinformation “infection”

Works on tactics

Scalable, proactive

Creates “herd immunity” baseline

Debunking

Treats existing “infection”

Targets specific myths

Precise, reactive

Handles persistent or new variants

TRUSTED INFORMATION IS A LIFE-SAVING
RESOURCE —

as vital as vaccines, clean air, or safe water.

INFORMATION INTEGRITY IS PART OF HEALTH SECURITY

Thank you

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