



EUROPEAN MEDICINES AGENCY
SCIENCE MEDICINES HEALTH

Addressing mis- and disinformation

Patient and Consumer Working Party (PCWP) plenary meeting

Presented by Monika Benstetter on 27 June 2023

An agency of the European Union





Mis- and disinformation – what are we talking about?

Misinformation	Disinformation
False or misleading content that was not created with the intention of hurting others, though the effects can be still harmful.	False or misleading content that is spread with an intention to deceive, and which may cause public harm.



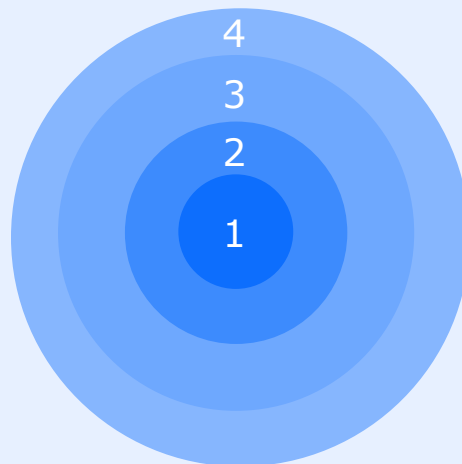


Mis- and disinformation on medicines and vaccines

- Spreading of misinformation has **a large public health impact**
- It undermines trust in medicines – e.g. can **limit uptake of life saving vaccines**
- Example of COVID-19: **Social media** used to amplify an “infodemic” where massive amounts of information are shared and **disinformation and misinformation can easily spread**
- In the COVID-19 pandemic, the spreading of false messages supported the **polarisation of the public debate**
- It is critical to **address confusion or misleading information**



How misinformation spreads – and the difficulty to contain it



- ① Information is misrepresented
- ② Article is corrected, but fake news spreads
- ③ Fact-checking from across EU, news loses some traction
- ④ Fake news spreads to other continents; spurring further fact-checking

Addressing misinformation on vaccine safety



False reports relating to the number of side effects in Eudravigilance with COVID-19 vaccines

FALSE



- EMA produced an **overview of safety updates with statistics on reported side effects**:
 - contextualising number of suspected side effects with **doses given in the EU/EEA**
 - **response to stakeholders'** request for further transparency and enhancing visibility of safety updates



COVID-19 vaccines: development, evaluation, approval and monitoring COVID-19 vaccines: studies for approval Safety of COVID-19 vaccines Treatments for COVID-19 Monitoring of COVID-19 medicines Transparency on COVID-19 medicines Guidance for developers and companies Availability of medicines Public health advice EMA's governance Antimicrobial resistance Biological and chemical threats Ebola Falsified medicines Pandemic influenza Zika Support for early access Supporting SMEs	Comirnaty Status as of 28/10/2021 428,000,000 Doses given to people in the EU/EEA 412,571* Reports of suspected side effects in the EU/EEA (see www.adrreports.eu) * Reported cases concern suspected side effects, i.e. medical events that have been observed after vaccination, but which are not necessarily related to or caused by the vaccine. Read latest safety update All Comirnaty safety updates >	Vaxzevria Status as of 28/10/2021 68,800,000 Doses given to people in the EU/EEA 214,528* Reports of suspected side effects in the EU/EEA (see www.adrreports.eu) * Reported cases concern suspected side effects, i.e. medical events that have been observed after vaccination, but which are not necessarily related to or caused by the vaccine. Read latest safety update All Vaxzevria safety updates >
	Spikevax Status as of 28/10/2021 61,600,000 Doses given to people in the EU/EEA 94,636* Reports of suspected side effects in the EU/EEA (see www.adrreports.eu) * Reported cases concern suspected side effects, i.e. medical events that have been observed after vaccination, but which are not necessarily related to or caused by the vaccine. Read latest safety update All Spikevax safety updates >	Janssen Status as of 28/10/2021 16,300,000 Doses given to people in the EU/EEA 28,244* Reports of suspected side effects in the EU/EEA (see www.adrreports.eu) * Reported cases concern suspected side effects, i.e. medical events that have been observed after vaccination, but which are not necessarily related to or caused by the vaccine. Read latest safety update All Janssen safety updates >

Tackling mis- and disinformation – tactics

- EMA **live streamed its regular press briefings** on multiple platforms and **tweeted facts in real time** to counter fake news
- Launch of an **EU-wide information campaign using an [EMA video](#)** on the safety of COVID-19 vaccines to address disinformation about the EU database for suspected side effects
- Organisation of a **[workshop with fact-checkers](#)** across the EU to provide detailed information on COVID-19 vaccines and their development, evaluation, approval and monitoring
- The **[European Vaccination Information Portal](#)**, a go-to source for factual information on vaccines.





Beyond COVID – a framework to tackle mis/disinformation



Monitoring

- Social listening; Media monitoring
- Data analytics on misinformation
- Identifying concerns: Queries from media and members of the public



Actions

Principles

- Proactive ('pre-bunking')
- Reach the public (e.g. social media, press briefings, interviews)
- Communicate the science behind decisions
- Transparency, e.g. data publication
- Engagement
- Health media literacy



Outreach

- Partnering for monitoring
- Sharing insights, data
- Sharing experience, best practice
- Building up expertise
- Co-creating strategies and actions
- Joint campaigning
- Amplify
- Languages

For discussion

- Do you have experience with tackling mis/disinformation in your organisation?
- Does your organisation have a strategy to address mis/disinformation?
- In your view, what are best practice examples for successful tactics to address mis/disinformation?
- What role would you see for yourself and your organisation in EMA's work against mis/disinformation?





Any questions?

Further information

Official address Domenico Scarlattilaan 6 • 1083 HS Amsterdam • The Netherlands

Telephone +31 (0)88 781 6000

Send us a question Go to www.ema.europa.eu/contact

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