



NSO Annual Summit

Newport, Rhode Island | November 13-15, 2025



Healthcare in the Age of Misinformation: Untruths and Consequences

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Learning Objectives

Define misinformation and the various terms for misinformation

Identify risks to patients and patient care and public health that can occur as a result of patients choosing misinformation treatment options over well-established conventional treatment.

Identify any professional obligations nurses and nurse practitioners have regarding healthcare misinformation

Identify key risk management tools nurses and nurse practitioners can incorporate into practice to limit their liability.

Background

Background:

Health misinformation is a serious threat to public health. It can cause confusion, sow mistrust, harm people's health, and undermine public health efforts. Limiting the spread of health misinformation is a moral and civic imperative that will require a whole-of-society effort.

--Vivek Murthy -U.S. Surgeon General 2021

Terms and Concepts

True v Sort of True v
Not True



Terms and Concepts

Information	Knowledge obtained by investigation; study or instruction; or the communication or reception of knowledge or information.
Factual Information	Verifiable, data that can be proven true or false based on concrete evidence, statistics and provable data.
Subjective Information	Personal opinions, interpretations, feelings and judgements influenced by individual experiences and biases
Opinions	Views or beliefs, not necessarily based on facts or knowledge

[Merriam-Webster](https://www.merriam-webster.com/): <https://www.merriam-webster.com/>

Concepts and Terms

Factual Information Verifiable, data that can be proven true or false based on concrete evidence, statistics and provable data.
(true)

Misinformation In accurate or misleading information; inadvertent spread of false or misleading information
(sort of true/truish)

Disinformation False information deliberately and often covertly spread (as by the planting of rumors) in order to influence public opinion or obscure the truth
(not true/pants on fire)

Infodemic** Too much information

Concepts and Terms

Confidence

The quality of being certain; faith or belief that one will act in a right or proper way

Hesitancy

slow to act or proceed (as from fear, indecision, or unwillingness) : tending to [hesitate](#) : showing or feeling reluctance or [hesitation](#)

Resistance

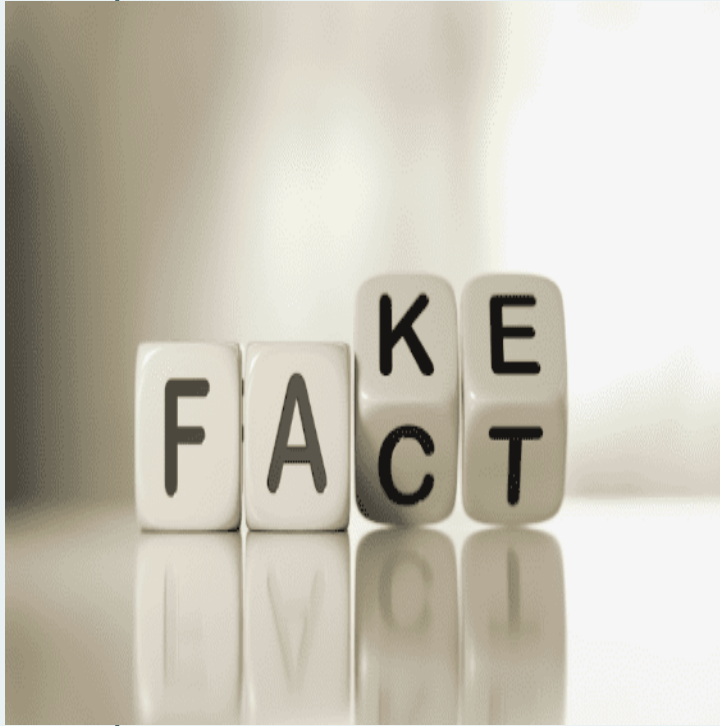
Working against or in opposition to

How Did We Get Here

(There is nothing new under the sun)



Image Source: <http://www.mcgill.ca/oss/channels/event/dr-joe-schwarz-chemical-confusion-225625>



- Vaccines cause autism
- Chlorine Dioxide can cure autism
- Tylenol causes Autism
- Circumcision causes autism
- Drinking lots of water can flush out covid
- Got a butter is good for burns

There is nothing new under the sun

Misinformation and disinformation has been around for as long as people could give advice to each other



What Changed

- Technology
 - The internet – ideas can travel further and faster (the internet and AI)
- Social Norms
 - Post Covid disruption of social bonds
 - Distrust of institutions
 - Distance between providers and patients (remote)
- Fear-based decision making
 - Reptilian brain – emotional not rational
- Financial profit (influencers and opportunist)
- Authoritative Bodies (CDC, HHS, Government)
 - Previously fringe ideas now are amplified by governmental agencies

Sources and Spread

- Digital Ecosystem
 - Social media platforms, influencers, and resulting echo chambers (TikTok, YouTube, Facebook, etc.)
 - Search engines and unregulated websites and pseudoscience content

- Patient-to-Patient Networks
 - Online forums, message boards, group chat and support groups

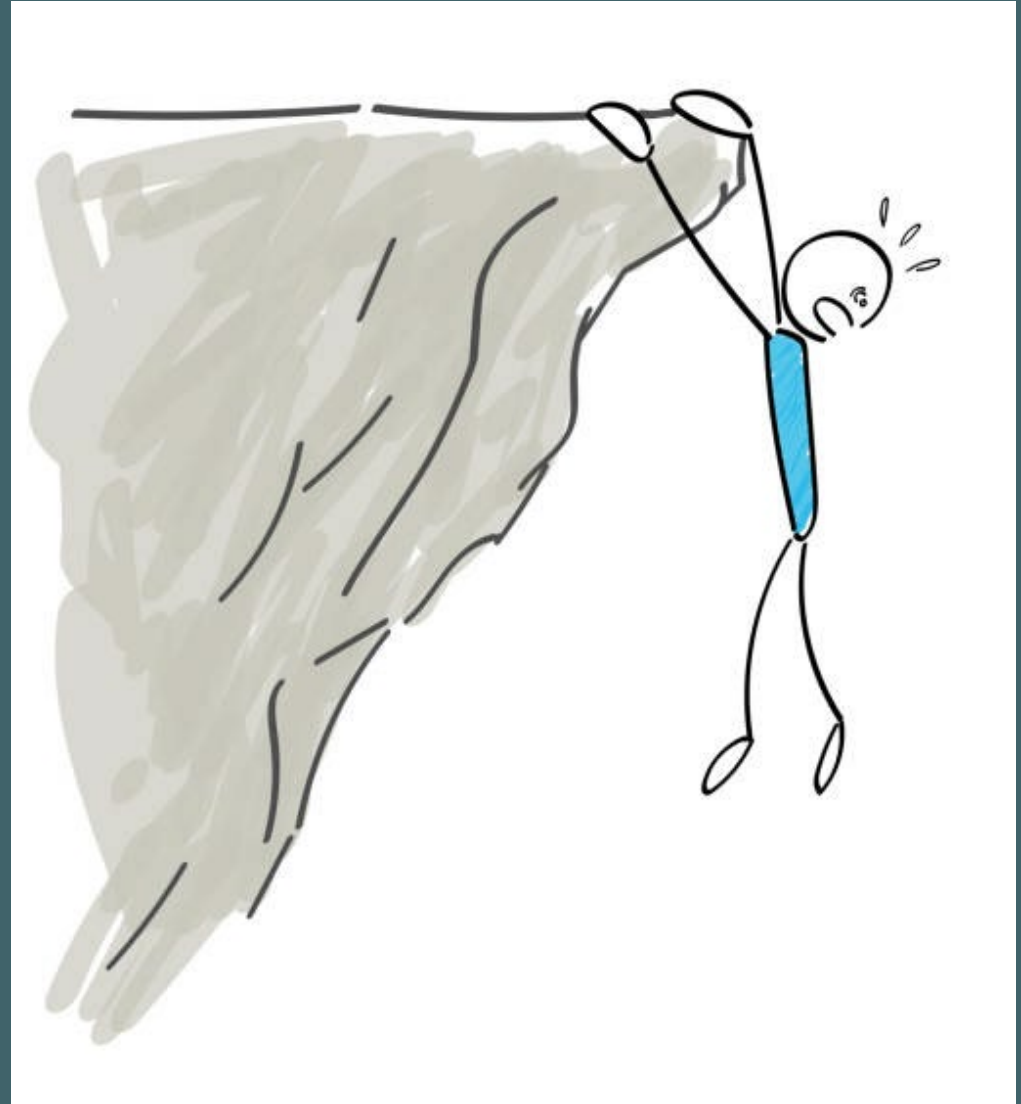
- Misinformation from Medical Professionals
 - Off-label advice, non-evidence-based treatments

- Influence of AI and Misinformation Amplification – Algorithms prioritizing sensational of “click” worthy content (often misleading content)

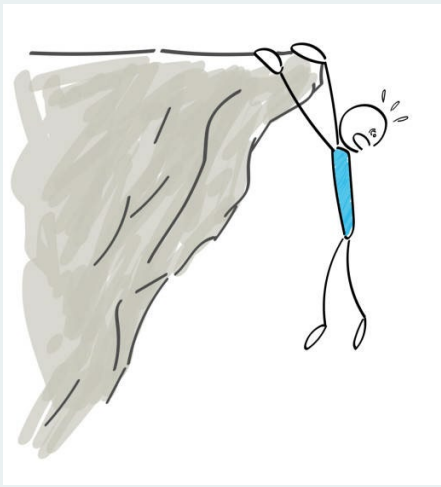
Sources and Spread

- Almost 72% of people consult the internet as their initial source for seeking out health related information (NIH Friedman)
- Approximately 40% of the health-related posts on social media are found to be false (2023)-suarez)

Consequences



[Image source: istockphoto.com](https://www.istockphoto.com)



- Vaccine Hesitancy and Resistance – Covid vaccine and others
 - The U.S. Experienced more Covid deaths than any other country

- Re-emergence of disease thought to have been cured or eradicated
 - Measles was declared eliminated in the US in 2000
 - This year over 1000 cases of measles have been reported with over 700 of them in Texas alone with 2 deaths reported

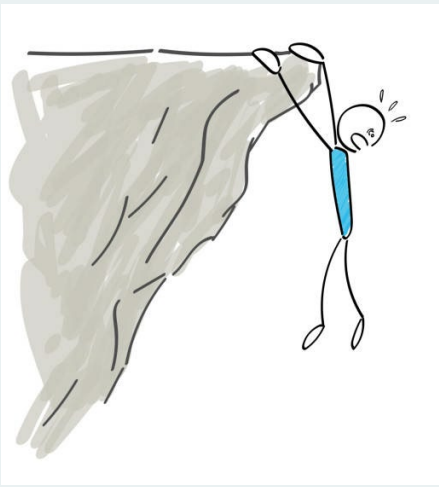
- During the Covid pandemic influencer claimed methanol could cure the corona virus
 - Nearly 6000 people were hospitalized, approximately 800 people died and approximately 60 people became blind

What
could go
wrong?



- Physical Harm
Delayed care, inappropriate treatments, vaccine hesitancy
- Psychological Harm
Fear based decision making, distrust in care and care providers, anxiety, or false hope
- Financial Consequences
Costly ineffective treatments, loss of insurance coverage
- Erosion of Trust
In medical professionals, institutions, and science
Decline in preventative care

What
could go
wrong?



- Legal Liability
 - Malpractice tied to misinformation spread failing in duty to correct false beliefs
 - Liability for content shared or endorsed

- Ethical Considerations
 - Balancing autonomy vs. beneficence
 - Maleficence in counseling misinformed patients

- Reputational Risk
 - Online reviews, media backlash
 - Loss of trust – CDC and governmental agencies

- D. Regulatory Actions
 - Licensing board sanctions
 - Institutional disciplinary actions

What
could go
wrong?

Prevention & Mitigation



Image Source: <https://colettecarlson.com/2023/09/18/7-important-ways-to-speak-your-truth-and-build-trust/>

Prevention and Mitigation

➤ For Providers

- Clear communication, active listening, and digital literacy counseling
- Documentation of misinformation discussions
- Continuing education in digital health literacy
- Referring to trusted sources (??? What are our trusted sources)
- Check and confirm your sources

Prevention and Mitigation

➤ For Institutions

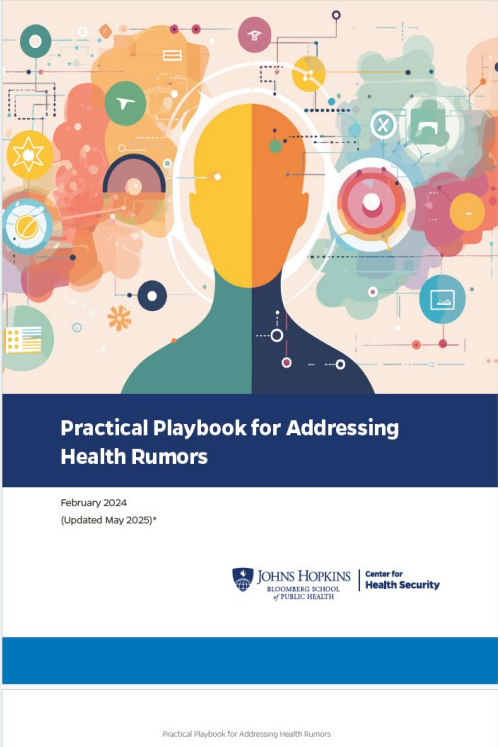
- Staff training regarding digital literacy and misinformation detection
- Policies for online behavior and patient education
- Integrating media literacy in care plans

Prevention and Mitigation

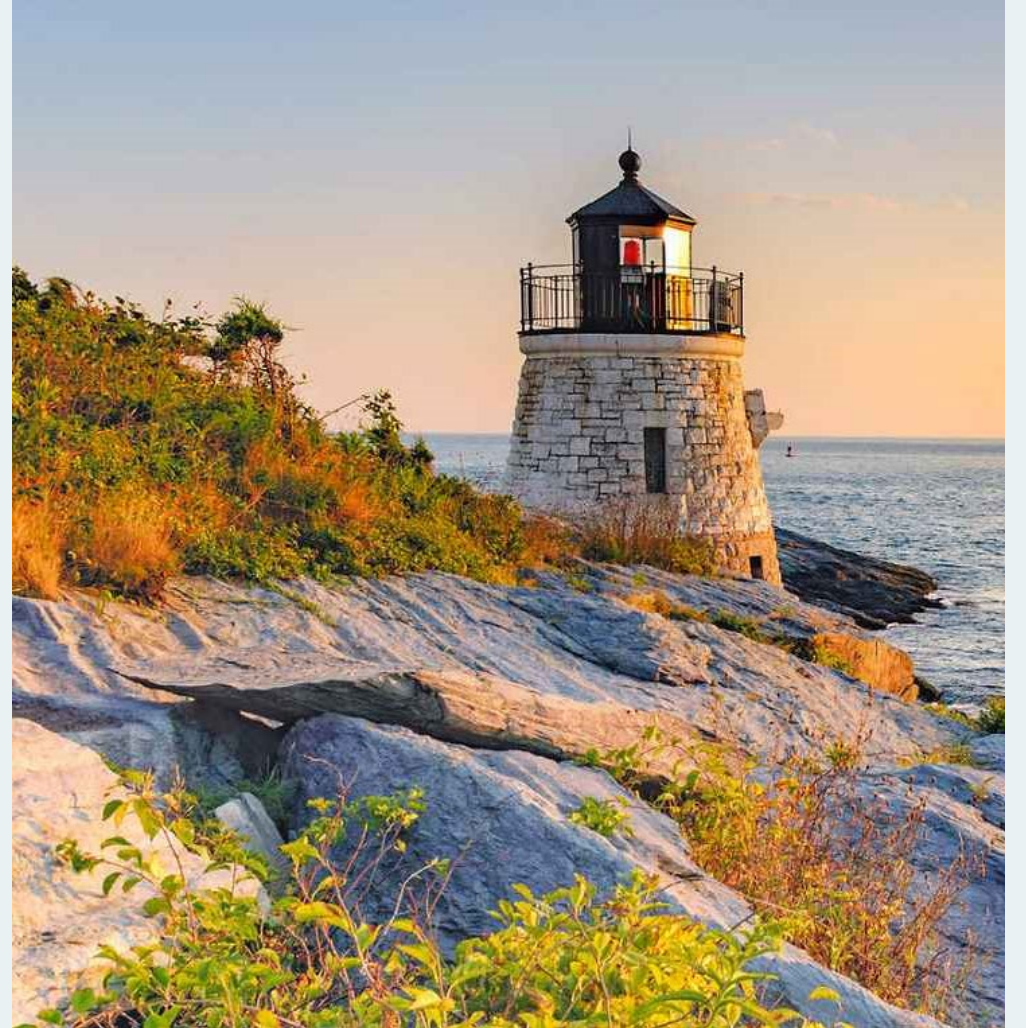
➤ For Policy and Regulation

- Advocacy for tech regulation and misinformation flagging
- Professional guidelines on misinformation management
- Regulation and accountability for

Prevention and Mitigation



Questions?



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