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## **BRIEF19**

*A daily review of covid-19 research and policy*

### **SPECIAL BRIEFING**

*Editor's note: Here at Brief19, we are committed to fighting medical disinformation, one briefing at a time. But what are the heavy-hitters of the internet and social media space doing to stop harmful stories from going viral? To learn more, we invited two Misinformation Policy Managers at Facebook to brief us on what they are doing to promote reliable health, science, and medical information during the pandemic.*

*—Jeremy Samuel Faust MD, MS*

#### **Facebook's approach to covid-19 and vaccine misinformation.**

Since covid-19 was declared a public health emergency almost a year ago, Facebook has been working to connect people to reliable information and limit misinformation about the pandemic. We have recently [expanded these efforts](#) to address concerns around vaccine hesitancy and covid-19.

A key part of our strategy to combat misinformation is to promote authoritative information. We have connected over 2 billion people from 189 countries to information from the World Health Organization (WHO) and other health authorities through our [COVID-19 Information Center](#) and messages in people's feeds. Facebook is now [running the largest worldwide campaign](#) to promote authoritative information about covid-19 vaccines, including promoting authoritative results in searches and giving \$120 million in ad credits to national health ministries, NGOs, and UN agencies.

Connecting people to reliable information is only half the challenge. To limit misinformation, our [covid-19 policies](#) aim to minimize health harm while still allowing people to discuss, debate, and share personal experiences, opinions, and news. We remove content with claims that health authorities have confirmed are both (a) false and (b) would likely contribute to imminent physical harm—including increased likelihood of exposure to or transmission of the virus, or adverse effects on the public health system. For example, “vitamin C cures COVID-19,” or “hospitals kill patients to increase their COVID numbers!” We also may remove Pages, Groups, and Instagram accounts that repeatedly share such information.

Building on these policies, we are now removing more misinformation to address vaccine hesitancy during the pandemic. Since December, we've removed false information about covid-19 vaccines, including claims that they contain a microchip, change DNA, or were designed for population control. Earlier this month, following consultations with health organizations like the WHO, we began removing additional debunked theories about vaccines in general, including claims that they are toxic or cause autism. We also began removing other common covid-19 hoaxes debunked by multiple of our independent fact-checking partners, including that covid-19 is man-made, patented, or not new.

For other content, we reduce distribution of posts rated false by one of our 80-plus [independent fact-checking partners](#) (covering over 60 languages), and we display a warning label with more context, prohibit it in ads, and further restrict repeat offenders.

Under these policies, between March and October 2020, we removed more than 12 million pieces of content on Facebook and Instagram and displayed warnings on about 167 million pieces of content on Facebook.

Expanding these efforts will help us continue to take aggressive action against misinformation about covid-19 and vaccines. As the situation evolves, we'll continue to review content on our platforms and engage with experts to provide additional policy guidance.

—*Aaron Berman and Krista Cox, Misinformation Policy Managers, Facebook*

*Kimi Chernoby, MD, JD, Policy Section Founder, Joshua Niforatos, MD Research Section Editor, Frederick Milgrim, MD, Editor-at-Large, Barb Cunningham, Copy-editor, Benjy Renton, Thread-of-the-Week, Anna Fang, Week-in-Review. Megan Davis, social media. Kane Elfman PhD, Publishing and Design. Jeremy Samuel Faust MD MS, Editor-in-Chief. <http://www.brief19.com/> Twitter: [@brief\\_19](https://twitter.com/brief_19) [submissions@brief19.com](mailto:submissions@brief19.com). Brief19 is a daily executive summary of covid-19-related medical research, news, and public policy. It was founded and created by frontline emergency medicine physicians with expertise in medical research critique, health and public policy.*