Is the Global Infodemic a greater threat than the Pandemic?

Lola Dare, President, Chestrad Global
An **infodemic** is an excessive amount of information concerning a problem, including wide and rapid spread of misinformation, such that the solution is made more difficult.

Generally reserved for diseases that have spread across continents or the entire world.

An **epidemic** disease is one “affecting many persons at the same time and spreading from person to person in a locality where the disease is not permanently prevalent.” The World Health Organization (WHO) further specifies **epidemic** as occurring at the level of a region or community (RR>1).

Diseases with RR<1 for which reporting is mandatory.
Definitions II

Fact

- Information or a thing that is known or proven to be true

Opinion

- A person’s view or judgement about something based on personal circumstance or understanding

Myth

- A widely held but false belief or idea. Traditional story, especially one concerning the early history of a people or explaining a natural or social phenomenon, and typically involving supernatural beings or events

Fake News

- Fake news is a form of news consisting of deliberate disinformation or hoaxes spread via traditional news media (print and broadcast) or online social media. Fake news is written and published usually with the intent to mislead in order to damage an agency, entity, or person, and/or gain financially or politically, often using sensationalist, dishonest, or outright fabricated headlines to increase readership
Diversity in the COVID-19 Pandemic

Timing and width of peak uncertain due to:
- Stochasticity in early dynamics
- Heterogeneities in contact patterns
- Spatial variation
- Uncertainty in key epidemiological parameters

Epidemic growth, doubling time 4–7 days

Social distancing flattens curve

Risk of resurgence following lifting of interventions
Chronic Health Inequities - The Haves and the ‘Have Nots’

Fragile and Diverse Health Systems Capacities - No one was ready

Lockdown an existential threat to Social Protection especially in Urban Slums – ecosystems of disease transmission

Travel Restrictions with interruption to supply chain systems across all sectors – Hunger became a greater threat
Magnitude and Reach of the COVID-19 Infodemic

As at 28th July 2020
www.worldometer.com/coronavirus

- **Epidemic**
  - Variable

- **Pandemic**
  - Millions
  - USA: 4,433,410 (6 months)
  - Brazil: 2,446,391 (5 months)
  - South Africa: 452,529 (4 months)
  - Spain: 325,862 (5 months)
  - UK: 300,111 (6 months)
  - Italy: 246,286 (6 months)
  - Nigeria: 41,189 (5 months)
  - Total: 16,672,139 (9 months)

- **Multiple Infodemics**
  - Billions
  - One week or less
  - Total: 7.8 billion
Complex Erosion

Fragile Public

TRUST

Sincerity
Consistency
Competence
Integrity
Reliability
Commitment
## Implications of the Infodemic: FEAR ABOVE SCIENCE

### POLICY
- Epileptic application of science and evidence
- Policy and legislative knee jerks
- Shift in resource allocations from Essential Health Services to COVID19 care
- Economic meltdown
- Inappropriate application of economic and social protection palliatives

### PEOPLE
- Vaccine hesitancy and frank resistance
- Limited risk perception
- Inappropriate risk protective behaviour
- Rising COVID19 stigma
- Reluctance to seek care
- Refusal to give care
- Mental Health Challenges – from both infodemic and the prolonged lockdown
INFODEMIOLOGY

INFODEMIONIC MANAGEMENT

TRANSDISCIPLINARY APPROACHES

1. Social listening to understand the public's concerns and misinformation.
2. Deliver high-quality health information.
3. Apply interventions, toolkits, methods.
4. Counter misinformation and disinformation.
5. Monitor info, Environment, and Responses.
6. Support healthy behaviors and resilience, to misinformation at individual, community and societal levels.
7. Strengthen outbreak preparedness and response in acute health events.

ONGOING MONITORING, REAL TIME INSIGHTS AND STRATEGY REFINEMENT
ComCOVID
A Resource Hub to support Community Collectives and Citizens Action Against COVID19

http://chestrad-ngo.org/comcovid-resource-hub/
COMING SOON
NOT EVERYTHING YOU READ IS CORRECT!

FACT CHECK!

• Re-building Public Trust
• Be context specific in the response
• Manage collateral negative impact of the response transparently
• Be clear. Is this your informed opinion or a fact? Anything else is a myth or fake news!

• You are responsible for what you share, VALIDATE FIRST!
  • Are other sites reporting it?
  • Is this someone reporting an opinion or sensational news item?
  • Is this a credible source?
  • Is the information up to date, and referenced?
  • Are the images valid?
  • Is the message clear to understand?
  • Are the suggested actions clear and safe?
SOME FACT CHECKING SITES!

- WHO: https://covid19.who.int/
- BUPA: https://www.bupa.co.uk/newsroom/ourviews/fact-check-coronavirus
- WORLDOMETER: https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/
- FULLFACT https://fullfact.org/latest/
- UK Government: https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus
- NCDC: https://covid19.ncdc.gov.ng/
- AFRICAN CDC: https://africacdc.org/covid-19/
- CHESTRAD GLOBAL http://chestrad-ngo.org/comcovid-resource-hub/