

OECD meeting – public health and disinformation – COVID-19 vaccine 19 Nov. 2020

5.1.2e 5.1.2e - Wellcome Trust

- Vaccine hesitance in general not too bad, especially in lower income countries people more vaccine confident.
- Especially in East Europe and Japan low confidence in vaccine safety
- Negative correlation between income and vaccine confidence (The richer the country, the lower the confidence). South Asia and Eastern Africa confidence levels highest.
- Trust in vaccines is strongly linked with trust in scientists, institutions and healthcare professionals.

5.1.2e - Pew Research Center

- Public opinion on vaccines is a special case, because the opinion of a small minority has a big impact on the discussions.
- The covid vaccine relates to how people perceive vaccines in general, but also something particular for the covid vaccine, because of the political division that is being created. The core difference is whether people view COVID-19 as a problem for the economy (republicans and democrats), or also as a threat for the population as a whole (only democrats).
- Confidence in medical scientists to act in best interest of the population has grown since outbreak of COVID, but only among democrats, not republicans.
- In the US over time, a drop of 20 percentage point was observed in willingness to vaccinate, across all groups. Unclear why, but message is how quickly public opinion can change.

5.1.2e - London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine

- The experience with the covid vaccine will have big implications for confidence in future vaccines developed.
- For communicators it is important to put out a coherent story about the vaccine, despite of different vaccines and their developments.
- There is a different sentiment around COVID vaccine compared to HIV or other vaccines in South Africa.
- Social media is playing a big role in the spread of disinformation and the information is spreading across continents virally. It spreads quicker than the virus, sometimes within a few hours. For example the videos of (non-official) frontliners with white coats in the US against the vaccine was broadly found on Facebook feeds in Nigeria.
- Dominant themes: resistance to government control and the virus being a hoax.
- Online misinformation threatens COVID-19 vaccine uptake. In the UK, when the misinformation was seen, a drop in vaccine confidence was observed. 5/10 people has seen 1 of the 5 most shared misinformation messages on social media.
- Sentiments towards vaccines change over time.
- More information on www.vaccineconfidence.org

Panel discussion: above people + 5.1.2e (Under-Secretary-General for Global Communications) + 5.1.2e (Member of European Parliament) + 5.1.2e (pro-vaccination activist)

- You should inform people that they are wrong, but approach them with respect and love.
- Statistics are human beings with the tears dried off. Aim is to get people to care, but also to trust.
- Idea to engage with the hesitant groups to understand what holds them back and which information is needed and in which way best to communicate.
- Some actors are savvier in the social media space than the public institutions.
- Because we are working with a new disease, new information is coming out all the time and sometimes this is contradictory. For example the advice on the masks, first health professionals and now everyone, this did not benefit trust and confidence in the government.

- People are hungry for good information, but they can't find it. There is good information available, but often in user-unfriendly documents. So we should focus on content that is social media optimized, entertaining and easy to use and brought out on channels where people are interacting. New norm: pause before sharing.
- Look at the vaccine hesitant people, who could go both ways, to engage with them in the discussion, instead of those who already believe their right.
- The human story is essential, people go numb by data. Emotional intelligence needs to be in the forefront in times like this.
- Most important to make sure we have the process right and safety, before we communicate. Example of Putin who communicated safety, before it was even tested on more than 100 people. CEO of Pfizer who made 5 million dollars when selling his shares exactly on the day that the vaccine results were presented (selling of shares was planned, but the presented results not) and President Trump who downplayed the risks of the vaccine.
- Because of the shortage in January-March, people who doubt will see other people queue up, so that will affect the hesitant group.
- There is no point in making something compulsory when it will not be available for everybody.
- With regard to civil liberties, there is no fundamental right that overrides other rights (liberty, vs. having good health). Right to celebrate is not in the constitution or in the human right treaties. This should be communicated properly.