

AN INFODEMIC MANAGEMENT APPROACH TO SUPPORT OF HEALTH WORKERS IN PNG DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Authors:

Nikki Teggelove¹, Brooke Dickson¹, Arun Menon¹, John Millan ²

¹ *ASHM International Division*

² *PNG Sexual Health Society*

Background/Purpose: Infodemic Management is the strategic and systematic use of evidence-based approaches to manage the overabundance of information (including misinformation) during a pandemic. Papua New Guinea (PNG) has experienced a robust infodemic during COVID-19, impacting on the **public health** response and creating vaccine hesitancy and fear among communities. Health workers have remained a trusted source of COVID-19 knowledge (Hoy, Wood and Moscoe, 2021) during the pandemic in PNG and provide a strong conduit for flow of consistent, good information to their local communities . Building resilience to misinformation among health workers serves to curb the flow of myths and rumours about COVID-19 within the health system and beyond. The pandemic has impacted on HIV and **health systems** globally. By adopting an infodemic management approach to support of health workers in PNG, the authors aimed to support the national COVID-19 response, boost vaccine confidence, build resilience to misinformation and limit health service disruptions.

Approach: Establishment of COVID-19 Support Platforms through WhatsApp, Text & Email across Catholic Church Health Services and ChildFund in PNG. Conduct of WhatsApp Live Sessions to encourage social listening and real-time debunking of circulating misinformation. Facility Support Sessions for messaging tailored to specific health service contexts.

Outcomes/Impact: Over 250 health workers accessing a reliable source of emerging and evidence-based information on COVID-19. Establishment of a strong support network and Community of Practice for health workers during the pandemic. Health worker vaccination rates within the projects are nearly double the national rate for health workers in PNG. (surveillance data PNG)

Innovation and Significance: Infodemic management is an emerging field of public health that has applications beyond COVID-19. Building confidence and competence among health workers to recognise and address misinformation is an important step in curbing the infodemic and supporting the local health response during health emergencies.

Hoy, C., Wood, T., & Moscoe, E. (2021) Addressing Vaccine Hesitancy: Survey and Experimental Evidence from Papua New Guinea. World Bank Group: Poverty and Equity Global Practice. [World Bank Document](#)

Disclosure of Interest Statement: This work was supported by the Australian government aid program in partnership with the PNG government, through the Sexual and Reproductive H Integration Project and Child Fund projects.