

FAKE NEWS IN COVID ERA AND ITS IMPACT BEYOND SARS-CoV-2:

HTLV-1 CASE

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Background/Purpose:

During COVID19 pandemic, public health response had, for the first time, social media as both as an ally and an enemy. Inaccurate information can be quickly spread via web, and it negatively affects the response to COVID19, inducing vaccine hesitancy, and refusal to comply with recommendations that reduces SARS-CoV-2 transmission. Polarization also contributes to insufficient dialogue and is accelerated by social media. HTLV is a neglected infection that has been benefiting from social media, as a tool to increase awareness. In this report, the dissemination of misinformation about HTLV-1/2 in social media is discussed.

Approach:

HTLV Channel is a platform created to increase HTLV awareness. Surveillance of publications referring to HTLV or related topics is routinely done. A Brazilian newspaper post about HTLV, published during HTLV World Day 2021, had a good outreach (4,337 likes, 161 comments). Among comments, posted by public, misinformation was identified.

Outcomes/Impact:

Individuals' perceptions on COVID19 and their political view clearly influenced posts with misinformation. Misinformation included that COVID19 vaccine is causing HTLV, HTLV is a side effect of COVID19 vaccine, a laboratory created HTLV, the use of mask prevents HTLV, virus doesn't exist.

Innovation and Significance:

HTLV World Day is a good strategy to increase awareness about HTLV and social media is an interesting tool to achieve this goal. However, the spread of misinformation may impair the implementation of measures to control HTLV, may contribute to increase stigma and undermine efforts to shed light on HTLV infection. The dissemination of fake news, and the polarization that have been observed during COVID era may have a broader impact on other infections. Misinformation negatively influences public health response and there is a need to discuss measures to tackle this problem.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

No conflict of interest.