

Anti-Vax Bias Is Partly a Failure of Science Communication | Psychology Today Canada

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There is a big difference between impossible and improbable and between truth and lies. The importance of these differences is amplified when we're talking about science and critical issues of public health such as during a pandemic. We are hugely dependent on science and it is critical to almost every aspect of our lives but effective science communication is hampered by not just what but how it is communicated.

Improbable does not mean impossible

A big part of the problem we have right now with anti-vaxxers can be laid at the feet of science communication. Or, more accurately, a failure of effective science communication. Many folks don't understand the difference between probable and possible, improbable and impossible, likely and unlikely. Scientists are trained all the time to report their work in the starkest possible terms. Report what you find but then describe them in terms of how likely they are to be reproduced. This is the probability bit where the statistics and statements of certainty come in.

We're so hardwired as scientists to make sure we never overstate what we find. To make sure we outline all the possible limitations. We're pretty negative, if you get right down to it.

[...]

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