

# Big tech has a vaccine misinformation problem – here's what a social media expert recommends | The Conversation

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With less than half the United States population fully vaccinated for COVID-19 and as the delta variant sweeps the nation, the U.S. surgeon general issued an advisory that called misinformation an urgent threat to public health. The advisory said efforts by social media companies to combat misinformation are “too little, too late and still don’t go far enough.” The advisory came more than a year after the World Health Organization warned of a COVID-related “infodemic.”

There’s good reason to be concerned. A study in the U.K. and the U.S. found that exposure to online misinformation about COVID-19 vaccines reduced the number of people who said they would get vaccinated and increased the number of people who said they would not.

As a researcher who studies social media, I can recommend ways social media companies, in collaboration with researchers, can develop effective interventions against misinformation and help build trust and acceptance of vaccines. The government could intervene, but a bill to curb medical misinformation on social media filed in July is revealing some of the challenges – it’s drawing scorn for leaving to a political appointee decisions about what constitutes misinformation.

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