

# Coronavirus misinformation is dangerous. Think before you share | The Guardian

By Tom Phillips

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Last year we had a call from a concerned but grateful parent. Having previously been sceptical about vaccines, having read one of our [fact checks](#), she'd decided to go ahead and have her children vaccinated. It sticks in my mind as an example of the harm that bad information can do – not just to our democracy, which as fact checkers we're often asked about – but to our health.

Misleading claims around vaccines have encouraged parents to disregard medical advice and take unnecessary risks with their children's lives. Since the outbreak of the new coronavirus began, we have been fighting a similar tide of false claims and exaggerations. Much of this has originated and spread on social media. As is common during global news events – especially health crises – some have sought to pin the blame on familiar enemies, whether it is [5G technology](#), the [Rothschilds](#) or [Chinese lab scientists](#). Many people have spread conspiracy theories, playing on our fears by suggesting that somehow the institutions that are supposed to protect us somehow had forewarning of – or even planned – the global outbreak of this deadly virus.

[...]

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