

Flow of damaging COVID-19 disinformation must end now | American Medical Association

By Gerald E. Harmon

December 16, 2021

Building and maintaining patient trust begins with the exchange of honest and open communication and accurate information. Once lost, this trust is nearly impossible to restore—which is why the torrent of misinformation and falsehoods we’ve seen during the COVID-19 pandemic has been so damaging.

To understand why, it’s important to know the difference between misinformation and disinformation. These two words are so much more than just one letter apart. Misinformation applies to incorrect or misleading statements often spread unwittingly by people who may believe they are true. Disinformation, by contrast, describes deliberate falsehoods spread with the intent to deceive, and to manipulate behavior and public opinion by sowing confusion and division. Both are damaging, but disinformation is unconscionable.

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