MediaWell

News Item

How science helps fuel a culture of misinformation | Nieman Journalism Lab

By Joelle Renstrom
June 14, 2022

> On November 8, 2021, the American Heart Association journal Circulation published a 300-word abstract of a research paper warning that mRNA Covid vaccines caused heart inflammation in study subjects.
>
> An abstract typically summarizes and accompanies the full paper, but this one was published by itself. According to Altmetric, the abstract was picked up by 23 news outlets and shared by more than 69,000 Twitter users. On the basis of that abstract, a video on BrandNewTube, a social media outlet that circumvents YouTube's anti-misinformation policies, pronounced Covid vaccinations "murder." Sixteen days later, the American Heart Association added an "expression of concern," noting that the abstract might not be reliable, and on December 21 it issued a correction that changed the title to indicate that the study did not establish cause and effect, noting there was no control group nor a statistical analysis of the results.
>
> This incident underscores a flaw at the center of the scientific enterprise. It's all too easy to make outsize claims that sidestep the process of peer review. No publication should carry a standalone abstract, particularly one making such a bold claim, and particularly during a pandemic. But the problem goes much deeper than that: Even scientific papers that have passed through the intended safeguards of peer review can become vectors for confusion and unsubstantiated claims.
>
> […]

Source: How science helps fuel a culture of misinformation | Nieman Journalism Lab