

# In 2021, it's time to refocus on health and science misinformation | Nieman Journalism Lab

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Since 2016, the “field of misinformation” has been disproportionately focused on political disinformation, with emphases on both Facebook and Twitter. Globally, the larger threat has been health and science misinformation on a range of platforms.

But the field’s focus was not determined by the communities most affected by misinformation, nor by the relative harm of different types of misinformation. Instead, it was set by U.S.-based university researchers, media outlets, philanthropic institutions, and Silicon Valley-based platforms, whose obsession with election-related disinformation directed the focus of misinformation initiatives, interventions, and research projects over the past four years.

The impact of this prioritization by news and research organizations has left the U.S., and other countries, ill-equipped for the pandemic, with health authorities having to play catch-up around the challenges of misinformation, a disproportionate focus on interventions designed to slow down misleading political speech, and journalists unprepared to report on scientific research. To prepare for the growing levels of distrust in science and expertise, alongside the flood of actual misinformation we expect to see in 2021, researchers, technologists, journalists, philanthropists, and policymakers must refocus their attention to health and science communication, most notably around medicine and climate.

There are three recommendations that should be considered.

[...]

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