

Should spreading anti-vaccine misinformation be criminalised? | The BMJ

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Anti-vaccine disinformation, conspiracy theories, and fake news can often be considered counternarratives—expressions of resistance. In such cases, they can be born from and fed by distrust in authorities and institutions, expressions of resistance to hegemonic ideologies and rules. Hegemonic legislation that could be seen as criminalising the right to express legitimate worries or pose questions would only trigger more misinformation.

Instead of criminalising communication, other technical solutions for tackling misinformation have proved successful, such as efforts by Facebook and Twitter to deal with false claims through fact checking and labelling misinformation.

Moreover, trust in authorities, governments, and the healthcare system is key when it comes to ensuring high vaccine acceptance. The only way to sustainably reduce misinformation about vaccination—and to strengthen vaccine confidence and acceptance in the long run—is to increase trust in these institutions and authorities in different countries.

[...]

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