

The epistemic tragedy of coronavirus misinformation | Columbia Journalism Review

By Jon Allsop

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✖ **Yesterday, four of the most powerful men on earth**—Mark Zuckerberg, of Facebook; Jeff Bezos, of Amazon; Tim Cook, of Apple; and Sundar Pichai, of Alphabet, which owns Google and YouTube—were dragged to Capitol Hill (well, a videoconference) to answer to a subcommittee of the House of Representatives. [As well as allegations of monopolistic practices, abuses of privacy, and political bias](#), lawmakers asked about the spread of misinformation on social media, including content related to COVID-19, the disease caused by the coronavirus. Rep. David Cicilline, a Rhode Island Democrat who chairs the subcommittee, [grilled Zuckerberg on a nonsense-stuffed COVID video that went massively viral](#) earlier this week before Facebook pulled it down. Cicilline accused Facebook of exploiting such harmful content to juice engagement. Zuckerberg denied this. Rep. Jim Sensenbrenner, a Wisconsin Republican, [also asked about the incident](#). He described a claim from the video as “a legitimate matter of discussion,” and wanted to know why Facebook [had punished Donald Trump, Jr.](#), for sharing it. Zuckerberg gently replied that *Twitter*, not Facebook, had acted against Trump, Jr. [So such hearings go.](#)

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