

Unverified reports of vaccine side effects in VAERS aren't the smoking guns portrayed by right-wing media outlets – they can offer insight into vaccine hesitancy | The Conversation

By Matt Motta and Dominik Stecula

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Chances are you may not be not familiar with the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System, or VAERS. Co-managed by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Food and Drug Administration, VAERS was established in 1990 to detect possible safety problems with vaccines.

Unfortunately, the anti-vaccine movement has used this once-obscure database to spread misinformation about the COVID-19 vaccine.

VAERS is ripe for exploitation because it relies on unverified self-reports of side effects. Anyone who received a vaccine can submit a report. And because this information is publicly available, misinterpretations of its data has been used to amplify COVID-19 misinformation through dubious social media channels and mass media, including one of the most popular shows on cable news.

We are political scientists who study the social, political and psychological underpinnings of vaccine hesitancy in the U.S. In our recently published research, we argue that VAERS, despite its limitations, can teach us about more than just vaccine side effects – it can also offer powerful new insights into the origins of vaccine hesitancy in the U.S.

[...]

Source: [Unverified reports of vaccine side effects in VAERS aren't the smoking guns portrayed by right-wing media outlets – they can offer insight into vaccine hesitancy | The Conversation](#)