

Exercise: Conspiracy Theories

The purpose of this exercise is to enhance understanding of the role of media, how to analyse and critically examine information, and how to express oneself through media creation. For those who will work in healthcare, source criticism is an essential competency, as you will participate in both disseminating and potentially producing health information. The term infodemic is primarily used to describe rumour epidemics that spread a mixture of truth, fabrications, and outright falsehoods.

1. **Select a conspiracy theory:** Identify a specific and current news item related to health or healthcare (e.g., concerning the origin of a disease, distrust of vaccinations, or claims about alternative remedies lacking scientific foundation).
2. **Investigate where and how the theory has been disseminated online** (e.g., which platforms, what types of actors). Identify the "hooks" or "half-truths" that the theory employs to gain traction and spread. How might phenomena such as filter bubbles and echo chambers contribute to its dissemination?
3. **Use reverse image search** to verify that images originate from reliable sources. Also utilise scientific databases to examine the veracity of claims presented in the news item.
4. **Write a brief text** that could be published on a blog in which you comment on the findings your examination has produced. Reference websites you consider credible, but also support your reasoning with references to scientific articles.
5. **Discuss in groups** what consequences you believe widespread infodemics could have for public health.

Sources: <https://www.isof.se/aktuellt/arkiv-aktuellt/informationskampanjer/covid-19/sa-pratar-och-skriver-vi-om-corona/2020-02-13-infodemi> (swedish)

Further reading: <https://www.sverigesradio.se/artikel/7432596> (swedish)