Uppsala Monitoring Centre

A quick guide to

Fighting misinformation online

Public discussions of health and medicine are full of misinformation – false or misleading stories which can spread virally and undermine public health messaging. **It's very hard to change people's minds with facts.** It's more effective to spread good information about a topic before people are exposed to the misinformation. In other words, **it's easier to "pre-bunk" than to de-bunk.**

Truth

6 tips

to effectively fight misinformation online

TARGET THE "FENCE SITTERS"

1 **Spend your time and resources on those who haven't fully made up their mind.** It's too hard to try and change strong beliefs.

AVOID ONLINE ARGUMENTS

2 **Fill the space with clear, accurate, true information.** Social media algorithms reward conflict, so arguments only spread the misinformation further.

BUILD TRUST TO SPREAD TRUTH

3 **Be a regular source of reliable, truthful, transparent information.** People's beliefs are strongly influenced by the beliefs of those they trust.

START WITH THE TRUTH BEFORE DEBUNKING THE MYTH

4 **Explain the truth as simply and clearly as possible,** then warn that there is a myth about this topic. If people hear the myth before the truth, they tend to remember the myth instead.

UNDERSTAND COMMUNITY

5 **Identify and work with trusted communities** (patient groups, community health centres, pharmacists). Share reliable information with them to reach the public through existing relationships of trust.

USE STORIES TO MAKE THE TRUTH STICK

6 **Sources of misinformation often use personal narratives to make false facts stick,** but stories of real patient experiences can be used ethically to help make the truth stick, too.