

Provisional scope and purpose

Background

The 2019 corona virus disease (COVID-19) epidemic and response has been accompanied by a massive ‘infodemic’ - an over-abundance of information – some accurate and some not – that makes it hard for people to find trustworthy sources and reliable guidance when they need it. Due to the high demand for timely and trustworthy information about COVID-19, the World Health Organization (WHO) has established the Information Network for Epidemics (EPI-WIN) that unites technical and social media teams working closely to disseminate and amplify the evidence-based information about COVID-19, and to track and respond to misinformation, myths and rumours.

Aim

The aim of this technical consultation is to develop an infodemic response framework to guide targeted interventions to promote dissemination of reliable information about COVID-19, and reduce misinformation, rumors and myths about COVID-19. The discussion will raise awareness of the volume of information on the Internet; and will explore perceptions of segments of society and health care workers with regard to the use of qualified sources for health decision-making; but also to make recommendations that facilitate strengthening health worker capacities and institutional competencies related to digital literacy. The consultation will bring in a multidisciplinary team of scientists, public health decision-makers, medical journalists, technology and social media platforms, and civil society to address interventions and solutions.

Objectives

The infodemic response framework will consist of the following pillars. Participants will discuss and propose interventions in each pillar.

- Identify evidence: Scan, review and verify evidence and information
- Simplify knowledge: Ways of interpreting and explaining the science to different audiences
- Amplify action: Reach out and listen to the concerns of audiences and provide advice for action, define best and new channels of distribution
- Quantify impact: Describe the infodemic, measure change and impact of digital discourse; inform interventions at global, national and local levels and inform Member State engagement in a more coordinated “social dialogue”

Participants

- Academia: social scientists, epidemiologists, clinicians, communication
- Technology, web and social media platforms and companies
- Ministries of Health, Institutes of public health
- Amplifiers: WEF, IATA, Faith-based organization, World Council of Nurses
- Journalists/Media: health and science journalists, major media outlets
- Civil society: fact checking organizations

Format of virtual technical meeting

- Two half-day sessions, each with two panels discussing and presenting
- ZOOM limit is 500 participants
- Anyone can join in and listen, and submit questions on Zoom chat
- After first day, participants will be invited to contribute to submit ideas and suggestions for Infodemic measurement interventions, which will be discussed and reviewed on day 2
- This consultation will feed into forming a Community of Practice on infodemic management, and defining work streams on infodemic management

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Planned sessions

Day 1

Session 1: Managing infodemics – what is the new phenomenon?

- Multi-faceted discussion of the COVID-19 infodemic (national/local government, media, science, private sector, civil society perspectives)
- Challenges, impact, and approaches to infodemic management

Session 2: Infodemiology – how can the infodemic be managed, described and measured? Methods, tools and evidence from the past experience and from COVID-19 pandemic

- Interaction and engagement with COVID-19-related media, web and social media items
- Analysis of advertising online
- Fact-checking and relevance analysis, misinformation dynamics
- Characterizing social and societal dynamics of infodemic during outbreak
- Science of digital and social information flows and analysis in outbreaks

Evening activity: Invitation for collective contribution of ideas towards a framework for infodemic management at global, national and local levels

- Objective of exercise; focus on the four areas of infodemic management (Identify evidence; Simplify knowledge; Amplify action; Quantify impact), to brainstorm ideas.
- Logistics of submitting ideas
- Moderators will summarize suggestions and prepare recaps for session 4 next day

Day 2

Session 3: Infodemiology – how can the infodemic be described and measured? (Continued from session 2).

Session 4: A framework for managing infodemics (working across whole of society for evidence-informed policy)

- Report back from working groups
 - Identify evidence
 - Simplify knowledge
 - Amplify action
 - Quantify impact

Brainstorm of suggestions for an infodemic response framework at global, regional and country level