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# COVID19 CHECK FACT-CHECKING IN A PANDEMIC OF MISINFORMATION



**In the pursuit of viral shares and likes, countless pieces of false information arise and launch the panic.**

The times we live in are complex and uncertain. In the face of the unknown, fear is the enemy of the people. The narratives that fill the multiple screens we use throughout the day construct and reconstruct reality repeatedly. In the pursuit of viral shares and likes, countless pieces of false information arise and launch the panic.

On social media and on various websites, the distortion of reality is commonplace. Mass dissemination of content with misrepresented or false messages is regular practice on the Internet. During the COVID-19 pandemic, also emerged the disinformation virus. Despite the reliable information available online in the official channels of public health entities and governments, there are thousands of groups, pages and profiles on social media disseminating false information. Suspicions are raised. Lies are repeated until they become truth.

Critical thinking is vital at this crucial time in our lives. In this booklet we will present best practices for identifying reliable information and seeking out credible sources to help promote effective and transparent public health messages.

# HOW TO RECOGNIZE RELIABLE INFORMATION CONCERNING COVID-19?

1

## IS THIS INFORMATION TRUE OR FALSE?

To understand whether information about COVID-19 circulating on the Internet is true or false, it is important to ask: who is publishing the information and what is its source? We should investigate on a search engine to see if any media outlet has published that information. To do this, we simply select the main information and enter it in the search box of the search engine. Then we must click on the "news" tab. This way, we can see if any media outlet has published that information.

2

## ARE ALL MEDIA OUTLETS CREDIBLE?

If all media can make mistakes, the truth is that all media are subject to accountability mechanisms. This is not the case with pages that imitate social media to convey false information.

How then can we know if it is a false information site? We should search the name of the site and check the results. What about the information? It is not enough to read the title; we must understand if the text is well written and reports to reality. We should also check that the titles are not clickbait, i.e., that they are not just attractive to receive clicks. It is also important to check if there is any correspondence between the picture/photo and the text, or if the picture/photo is manipulated.

3

### IN PANDEMIC TIMES, IS INFORMATION ALWAYS CHANGING? SEMPRE A MUDAR?

Yes. Information and the social world are dynamic. In a pandemic, data and information are updated daily. Therefore, it is very important to check the date of publication of the articles and to what date the data is reported. In cases where this information is missing, it is important to question it and look for other credible sources of information.

4

### WHAT ARE THE BEST SOURCES TO SEARCH FOR INFORMATION ABOUT COVID-19?

The best sources of information about the pandemic are always the official ones. The World Health Organization and government websites are the most important and credible sources. Moreover, it is based on data from these entities that the media write their news. If we see information shared on social media and we are not sure if it is true, we should check the WHO or our government's website in search of credibility. We should also check the media regularly, always looking for their sources of information.

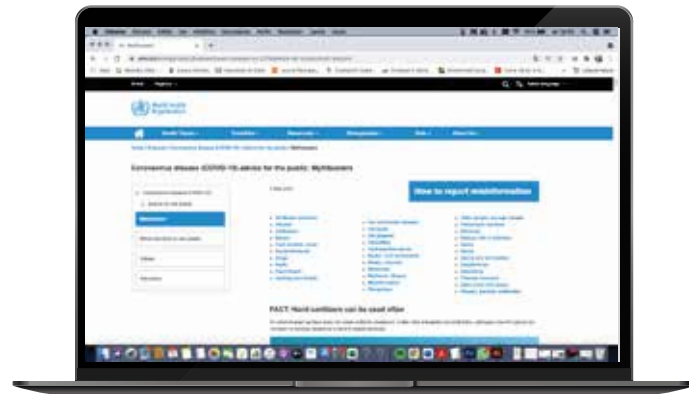
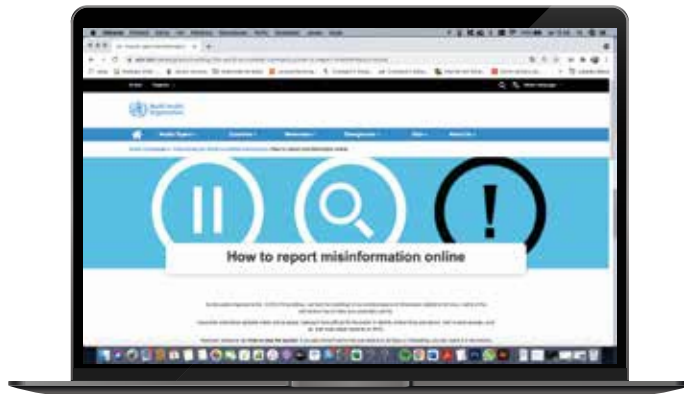


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# 5

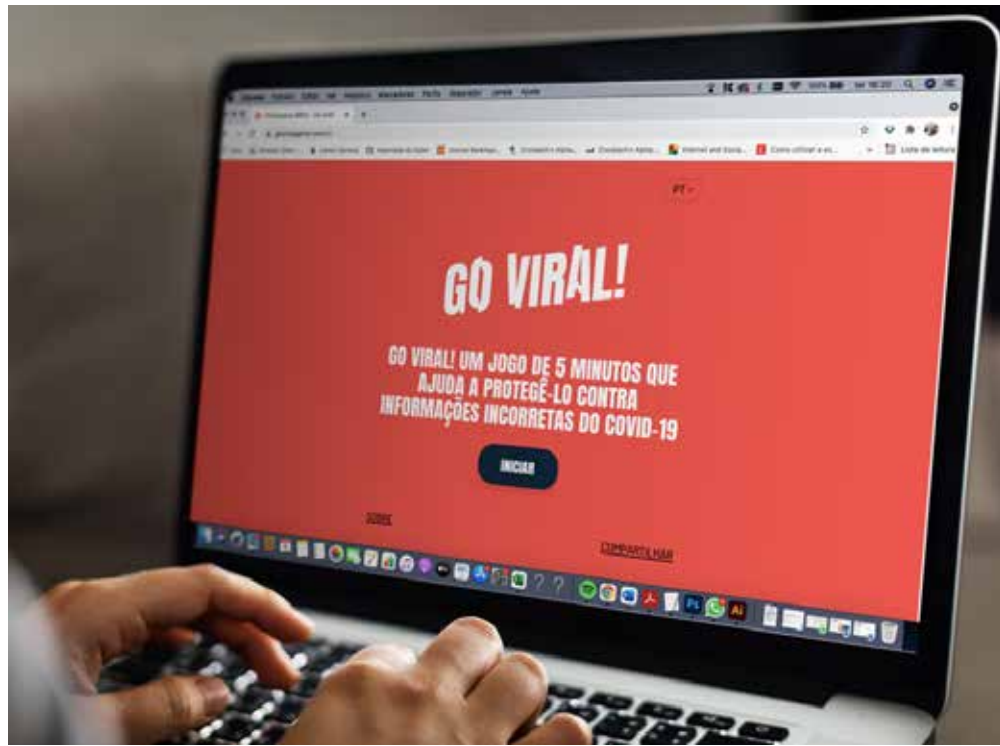
## WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I FIND FALSE INFORMATION CIRCULATING ON SOCIAL MEDIA?

Content on social media is often checked. As users, we can also report false information that we read or receive on platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, WhatsApp, TikTok or LinkedIn. WHO has a campaign to help users understand how the process of reporting false information on COVID-19 works. WHO also has a **Mythbusters** page to deconstruct misinformation narratives circulating on the Internet. Here we can be sure that COVID-19 is not an invention, that vaccines are essential if we want to control the pandemic, or that hydroxychloroquine does not prevent COVID-19.



## And how can I train myself to identify misinformation about COVID-19?

By playing! The Go Viral game, which was developed by the Social Decision-Making Lab at the University of Cambridge, Drog, Gusmanson and UK Cabinet Office, challenges us to look at the most common strategies for spreading false information and misinformation content about the COVID-19 pandemic.



Playing as a family is an excellent option to help us improve our skills to identify false information about COVID-19.

Before believing information and before sharing it, it is up to us to look critically at what is on the screen. The misinformation virus can be stopped if each person does their part: questioning and verifying.



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