

Viewpoint: Anti-vax conspiracy propaganda movement aiming to derail successful rollout of coronavirus vaccines

This war could pit public health officials and politicians against an anti-vaccination movement that floods social media with misinformation, conspiracy theories and propaganda aimed at convincing people that the vaccine is a menace rather than a lifesaving, economy-rescuing miracle.

Scariest of all? It could actually work.

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First, because of the pandemic's urgency, any promising Covid-19 vaccine is likely to be fast-tracked through the testing and approval process. ... That could create an opening for anti-vaccine activists to claim that it is untested and dangerous.

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Second, if a vaccine does emerge, there is a good chance that leading health organizations like the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation or the World Health Organization will have a hand in producing or distributing it. If that's the case, anti-vaccine activists, who have been crusading against these groups for years, will have plenty of material stockpiled to try to discredit them.

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Third, if and when a Covid-19 vaccine is approved for widespread use, people may be required to take it before being allowed to fly on certain airlines, attend certain schools or enter certain businesses. That's a good idea, public health-wise, but it would play into some of the worst fears of the anti-vaccine movement.

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