

QAnon followers play key role in infecting Facebook with vaccine conspiracy theories

[A new research effort by Facebook] is a large-scale attempt to understand the spread of ideas that contribute to vaccine hesitancy, or the act of delaying or refusing a vaccination despite its availability, on social media — a primary source of health information for millions of people.

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The research effort also discovered early evidence of significant overlap between communities that are skeptical of vaccines and [those affiliated with QAnon](#), a sprawling set of baseless claims that has radicalized its followers and been associated with violent crimes, according to the documents.

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In QAnon communities, skepticism of vaccines was connected to a distrust of elites and institutions.

Last year, external [researchers found](#) that QAnon groups in Facebook were influential in fueling the spread of a misinformation-filled documentary called “Plandemic” on social platforms.

The internal Facebook study found that comments that could contribute to vaccine hesitancy overlap with QAnon but also go well beyond it, into many other different types of communities. While QAnon groups appeared to be more focused on a possible distrust of authority as a reason for doubting the vaccine, other groups had different ways of expressing their doubts and worries. This finding suggests that public health experts will need to develop nuanced messages when trying to address vaccine hesitancy in the population.

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