

Viewpoint: Facebook and fake news — How the social media giant has emerged as the perfect platform for vaccine misinformation

You'd think during the worst pandemic in a century virtually everyone would be desperate to get their hands on a vaccine that promises to help them get their life back. But you'd be underestimating the power of Facebook and Instagram to provide all the necessary tools for anti-vaccine activists and other wellness hucksters to suck in converts. Over the years, these opportunists have cultivated a strategy optimized for the social era. They drip anti-science skepticism into Facebook groups and Instagram stories and posts, where algorithms reward content that elicits strong emotional reactions, further amplifying the misinformation.

These social media influencers, legitimized by their sizable follower counts, had a full year to [sow doubt about Covid vaccines](#) before Facebook took significant action. They've exploited public confusion and mixed messaging from government and health officials on everything from masks to vaccine side effects and safety. Facebook's official stance is that it doesn't ban posts unless they "cause imminent harm"—a threshold the social network claims vaccine misinformation only crossed months into a global inoculation campaign.

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"All of the truths that we've been trying to broadcast for many, many years, there are people hearing it," said Robert F. Kennedy Jr., son of RFK, and a leading vaccine conspiracy theorist. "Those seeds are landing on very fertile ground."

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