

## Health Disinformation

Dear Editor,

Accurate and evidence-based information in the field of health is of particular importance. However, in recent years, society has witnessed an increase in types of information disorders including misinformation, disinformation, and malinformation.<sup>[1]</sup> This article is intended to explain health disinformation, but before that, it is necessary to point out the differences between these three concepts. (1) Misinformation: can be completely false or suspicious or relatively correct, but it is disclosed in good faith and not with the intention of harming others. For example, people who are unaware of the incorrectness of medical information may spread it.<sup>[2]</sup> (2) Malinformation: could be relatively accurate information related to a particular situation, or even information based on persuasive medical knowledge that is disclosed with the aim of harming others. (3) Disinformation: is completely incorrect and is deliberately disclosed to harm others with motives of political, financial, psychological, or social.<sup>[3]</sup>

Therefore, health disinformation is defined as any claim with the purposes of earning financial gain or fraud that can make problems in the management of diseases.<sup>[3]</sup> Since this disinformation can harm the health of individuals and communities, the importance of identifying it and preventing it has become a necessity in public health.

Health disinformation may be presented to people under engaging and interesting titles, but these claims are based on completely false evidence. For example, press releases based on replacing the treatment of the disease with certain dietary supplements are examples of health disinformation in the field of nutrition. Furthermore, health disinformation generated in the pharmaceutical field for economic purposes may trigger overuse or nonuse of medicines that have their own specific medical consequences. Other examples include claims about problems or ineffectiveness of vaccines that reduce vaccination rates and the incidence of vaccine-preventable diseases.

The authors suggest strategies to prevent and deal with health disinformation as follows: (1) improving health literacy and media literacy of people to recognize correct health information. (2) To raise awareness of health disinformation, the websites of medical universities or other health organizations provide a safe space for the exchange of reliable health information and the response by doctors to the public. (3) To raise awareness among societies, health professionals should develop appropriate educational programs to prevent the spread of health disinformation and its diagnosis methods.

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### Conflicts of interest

Nothing to declare.

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