

WHO Initiative Would ‘Promote Desired Behaviors’ by Surveilling Social Media

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The World Health Organization (WHO) is proposing a set of recommendations for “social listening surveillance systems” designed to address what it describes as a “health threat” posed by online “misinformation.”

The WHO’s [Preparedness and Resilience for Emerging Threats](#) (PRET) initiative claims “misinformation” has resulted in an “infodemic” that poses a threat — even in instances where the information is “accurate.”

PRET has raised eyebrows, at a time when the WHO’s member states are engaged in negotiations on two controversial instruments: the “[pandemic treaty](#)” and [amendments to the International Health Regulations](#) (IHR).

The [latest draft of the pandemic treaty](#) contains language on how WHO member states would commit to “social listening.” Under article 18(b), WHO member states would commit to:

“Conduct regular community outreach, social listening, and periodic analysis and consultations with civil society organization and media outlets to identify the prevalence and profiles of misinformation, which contribute to design communications and messaging strategies for the public to counteract misinformation, disinformation and false news, thereby strengthening public trust and promoting adherence to public health and social measures.”

Remarking on PRET’s “social listening” proposals, [Michael Rectenwald, Ph.D.](#), author of “[Google Archipelago](#): The Digital Gulag and the Simulation of Freedom” and a former New York University liberal studies professor, told [The Defender](#):

“The WHO’s PRET initiative is part of the UN’s attempt to institute global ‘medical’ tyranny

using surveillance, ‘social listening’ and censorship. PRET is the technocratic arm of the WHO’s proposed pandemic treaty, which, if accepted by nation-states, would amount to the surrendering of national and individual sovereignty to this ‘global governance’ body.

“What better way to establish a one-world government than by using so-called global crises that must be addressed by nothing short of ‘global governance’? I remind readers that you cannot comply your way out of tyranny.”

WHO could use artificial intelligence to monitor social media conversations

A WHO document outlining the PRET initiative — “Module 1: Planning for respiratory pathogen pandemics, Version 1.0” — contains a definition of infodemic:

“Infodemic is the overabundance of information — accurate or not — which makes it difficult for individuals to adopt behaviors that will protect their health and the health of their families and communities.

“The infodemic can directly impact health, hamper the implementation of public health countermeasures and undermine trust and social cohesiveness.”

The document recommends that in response to the “infodemic,” countries should “incorporate the latest tools and approaches for shared learning and collective action established during the [COVID-19](#) pandemic.”

According to the WHO document, this can be done if governments “establish and invest in resources for social listening surveillance systems and capacities to identify concerns as well as rumors and misinformation.”

Such resources include “new tools and approaches for social listening ... using new technologies such as [artificial intelligence](#) to listen to population concerns on social media.”

According to the document:

“To build trust, it’s important to be responsive to needs and concerns, to relay timely information, and to train leaders and HCWs [healthcare workers] in risk communications principles and encourage their application.”

Risk communications “should be tailored to the community of interest, focusing on and prioritizing vulnerable groups,” the WHO said.

“Tailored” communication was a hallmark of public health efforts during the COVID-19 pandemic.

For instance, in November 2021, the Rockefeller Foundation, the National Science Foundation and the [Social Science Research Council](#) launched the [Mercury Project](#), which aimed “to increase uptake of COVID-19 vaccines and other recommended public health measures by countering mis- and disinformation” — in part by studying “differential impacts across socio-demographic groups.”

Similarly, PRET states that it will “incorporate the latest tools and approaches for shared learning and collective action established during the COVID-19 pandemic.”

These “tools and approaches” could be deployed during “acute respiratory events,” according to the document, which recommends that governments:

“Develop and implement communication and behavior change strategies based on infodemic insights, and test them during acute respiratory events including seasonal influenza.

“This includes implementing infodemic management across sectors, and having a coordinated approach with other actors, including academia, civil society, and international agencies.”

This is not the first time the WHO has addressed the so-called “infodemic.”

A WHO review published Sept. 1, 2022, titled “Infodemics and health misinformation: a systematic review of reviews,” found that “[infodemics and misinformation](#) ... often negatively impact people’s mental health and increase vaccine hesitancy, and can delay the provision of health care.”

In the review, the WHO concluded that “infodemics” can be addressed by “developing legal policies, creating and promoting awareness campaigns, improving health-related content in mass media and increasing people’s digital and health literacy.”

And a separate, undated WHO document advises the public on how we can “[flatten the infodemic curve](#).”

WHO, Google announce collaboration targeting ‘medical misinformation’

The WHO’s PRET proposals coincided with a new multi-year [collaboration agreement with Google](#) for the provision of “credible health-related information to help billions of people around the world respond to emerging and future public health issues.”

The agreement was announced on May 23 by Dr. Karen DeSalvo, Google’s chief health officer, on the company’s blog. She wrote:

“Information is a critical determinant of health. Getting the right information, at the right time can lead to better health outcomes for all. We saw this firsthand with the COVID-19 pandemic when it was difficult for people worldwide to find useful information online.

“We worked with the World Health Organization (WHO) on a range of efforts to help people make informed decisions about their health — from an SOS alert to surfacing locally relevant content about COVID-19 to YouTube policies on medical misinformation.”

One way Google will collaborate with the WHO is through the creation of more “knowledge panels” that will prominently appear in search results for health-related questions on the platform.

“Each day people come to Google Search looking for trustworthy information on various health conditions and symptoms,” DeSalvo wrote. “To help them access trustworthy information our Knowledge Panels cite content from reliable sources covering hundreds of conditions from the common cold to anxiety.”

“Working closely with WHO, we’ll soon expand to cover more conditions such as [COPD](#) [chronic obstructive pulmonary disease], hypertension, type 2 diabetes, [Mpox](#), Ebola, depressive disorder, malaria and more,” she added.

Google will make these Knowledge Panels available in several languages, including English, Arabic, Chinese, French, Russian and Spanish.

DeSalvo’s May 23 post also addressed an ongoing collaboration between Google and the WHO, [Open Health Stack](#) (OHS), which “help[s] accelerate the digital transformation of health systems around the world” and “lower[s] the barrier to equitable healthcare.”

Google also awarded the WHO with more than \$320 million “in donated Google Search advertising via ad grants” allowing the agency “to publish health topics beyond COVID-19, such as Mpox, mental health, flu, Ebola, and natural disasters.”

Google is slated to provide an additional \$50 million in ad grants to the WHO this year.

According to Google, the ad grants to the WHO represent the company’s largest such donation to a single organization.

Separately, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) tweeted on May 22 about the agency’s own efforts at combating purported “misinformation” and “disinformation.”

You can stop the spread of misinformation! <https://t.co/JcM10Oq5DY>
[pic.twitter.com/bzc9J3E1XA](https://t.co/JcM10Oq5DY)

— U.S. FDA (@US_FDA) [May 22, 2023](#)

The tweet contains a 35-second video, which claims “misinformation” travels “six times faster than the facts,” while promoting the FDA’s “[Rumor Control](#)” initiative.

A top priority of [FDA Commissioner Dr. Robert Califf](#), “Rumor Control” was launched in August 2022 and joins other agency initiatives to fight “misinformation” and “disinformation.”

“The growing spread of rumors, misinformation and disinformation about science, medicine, and the FDA, is putting patients and consumers at risk,” according to the FDA’s Rumor Control webpage. “We’re here to provide the facts.”

The initiative asks the public to do “three easy things” to “stop rumors from spreading”: “don’t believe the rumors,” “don’t pass them along” and “get health information from trusted sources like the FDA and our government partners.”

“Rumor Control” appears to have been [inspired by an initiative](#) developed by the [Virality Project](#), “a coalition of research entities” from six institutions “focused on supporting real-time information exchange between the research community, public health officials, government agencies, civil society organizations, and social media platforms.”

Documents released as part of the “[Twitter files](#)” in March revealed that the Virality Project, based out of the Stanford Internet Observatory, also called for the creation of a

disinformation board just one day before Biden announced plans to launch his government-run [Disinformation Governance Board](#).

Similar to PRET's recommendations to target "accurate" information that nevertheless contradicts establishment public health narratives, the [Virality Project worked with Twitter](#) and other social media platforms, recommending they "take action even against 'stories of true vaccine side effects' and 'true posts which could fuel hesitancy.'"

These censorship efforts included at least one tweet by Robert F. Kennedy Jr., chairman on leave of [Children's Health Defense](#).

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