

MEDIA ENGAGEMENT AND COVID MIS(DIS) INFORMATION

Department:

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Since the beginning of the COVID-19 Pandemic in 2020, there has been a rise of mis- and disinformation about the COVID virus, mask mandates, and the vaccines. This research engages with vaccine hesitancy and dis(mis)information online to develop a set of tools and best practices to address these issues.

“Media Engagement and COVID Mis(DIS)information” explores the relationship between local Kitchener-Waterloo communities and social media, examining personal, government, medical and professional accounts on social media platforms (Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok) to understand how social media audiences respond to and understand information about COVID-19 and the vaccine. Topics explored include COVID-19 vaccines and fertility and pregnancy, the effectiveness of pediatric vaccine for youths ages 5 to 11, COVID-19 boosters, medical exemptions, side effects like myocarditis and pericarditis, and efforts to build trust in COVID-19 vaccines within the local Black community.

This research develops infographics, based on community feedback and peer-reviewed research, about the vaccine’s effects, that are being widely shared on media as tools for healthcare providers, educators, and the general public to use when addressing vaccine hesitancy.

Interesting fact: Drs. Shana MacDonald and Kelly Grindrod first met at the UW daycare centre and have since connected with each other’s research interests.

