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## **New study on deadly rise of COVID-19 rumors and conspiracy theories globally**

A new global assessment has documented an “infodemic” in the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic that produced an extensive array of more than 2000 rumors, conspiracy theories and efforts to stigmatize victims—misinformation connected to hundreds of deaths, thousands of hospitalizations and many acts of violence that spread rapidly across 87 countries in 25 languages.

The peer-reviewed study was [published today in the \*American Journal of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene\*](#) by an international team of social scientists and infectious disease experts. It calls for a more focused effort by governments. The study reveals the incredible volume and variety of false claims that quickly circulated on platforms like Twitter and Facebook and media websites in just a short period, from the end of December 2019 to early April 2020.

- For example, there were claims a concoction of camel urine and lime or just plain cow urine can cure a COVID-19 infection.
- Among the claims with more damaging consequences, the study notes that a rumor circulating around the world regarding the curative powers of drinking methanol has been linked to 800 deaths, some 5900 hospitalizations and 60 cases of “complete blindness.”
- The researchers also compiled numerous reports of dangerous stigmatizations targeting health care workers and people of Asian ethnicity that were linked to at least 26 violent attacks.

The study found the misinformation gained traction within three distinct waves of infodemics, a term coined by the World Health Organization to describe an “an overabundance of information—some accurate and some not—that makes it hard for people to find trustworthy sources....” The researchers observed that COVID-19 misinformation follows a pattern that has been seen in other outbreaks, including the spread of HIV and Ebola. They noted it was further evidence that “during public health crises, people often concentrate more on rumor and hoaxes than on science.”

The full report, [available here](#), carries more insights, including an exhaustive list of rumors, conspiracy theories, and examples of COVID-19 stigmatization documented by the researchers.

Please contact Anna Chen if you have any questions or would like to speak with the corresponding author of the report, Dr. Md Saiful Islam with the International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research, Bangladesh (but who is currently based in Sydney, Australia).

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**About the American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene**

The American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene, founded in 1903, is the largest international scientific organization of experts dedicated to reducing the worldwide burden of tropical infectious diseases and improving global health. It accomplishes this through generating and sharing scientific evidence, informing health policies and practices, fostering career development, recognizing excellence, and advocating for investment in tropical medicine/global health research. For more information, visit [astmh.org](http://astmh.org).

**About the *American Journal of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene***

Continuously published since 1921, *AJTMH* is the peer-reviewed journal of the American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene, and the world's leading voice in the fields of tropical medicine and global health. *AJTMH* disseminates new knowledge in fundamental, translational, clinical and public health sciences focusing on improving global health.