Strategies to tackle COVID-19 misinformation
Empower the public to identify false information about COVID-19 is one strategy to fight the scourge of misinformation about the virus. So suggests authors from Africa Check and the Africa Centre for Evidence in a write up about a research project into effective interventions to tackle COVID-19 misinformation on WhatsApp. One of five strategies to curb the spread of health misinformation on social media, the authors explain how self-efficacy campaigns were found to be a useful tool in empowering members of the public to recognize health misinformation. The authors state how fact-checkers can integrate such campaigns into their editorial and social media messaging.

The African Institute for Development Policy reached its tenth year in December 2020, celebrating with a gala dinner attending by the Vice President of the Republic of Malawi, the Right Honourable Dr Saulos Klaus Chilima. AFIDEP has operated in over 25 African countries to support evidence-informed decision-making.

We’re building our gallery of stories of African evidence-informed decision-making. Want to feature your story? Reach out to us! We’re looking for examples of evidence making difference in policy design, resulting in positive results after implementation, or strengthening a system.

Calling all Kenyan journalists, bloggers, and social media influencers: AfricaCheck is offering a free, online fact-checking course happening on 21-22 January and 28-29 January. The aim of the workshop is to equip online content users and producers to recognise and counter instances of mis/disinformation.

Read how the South African GRADE Network, co-lead by Cochrane South Africa and the Centre for Evidence-based Health Care, collaborated with policy-makers to ensure decisions to deal with COVID-19 in the country were informed by the best-available health research in a timely way.

Putting the spotlight on… Dr Salem Shalaweh from Libya!
This young researcher based at the National Cancer Institute says “I am working with different government institutions as [a] multidisciplinary research[er] and I would like to be part of the AEN”. Welcome to this community Salem!

Want to spotlight yourself, your organisation, or someone else you know? Tell us about them and you could be featured in the next newsletter!

Mark your calendars
20 January: CEDIL webinar on innovations in responsive evidence synthesis services during COVID-19, online.
21-22 January: Evidence Synthesis & Meta-Analysis in R Conference, online.

We’re resharing our last blog of 2020, written by Siziwe Ngcwabe, the AEN operations manager, which shares the ideas so far for EVIDENCE 2022.

View all blog posts online and use the Network to share your work – submit your AEN blog here.
Million-dollar funding to fight COVID-19 with evidence

Canada’s federal government has invested in evidence-informed decision-making to combat COVID-19 with a $1 million grant to the COVID-19 Evidence Network to support Decision-makers (COVID-END) hosted at McMaster University. The network – led by Professor John Lavis, director of the McMaster Health Forum – brings together researchers to rapidly synthesis the best-available evidence on responding to COVID-19. Research evidence on health measures, health systems management as well as the social and economic impacts of COVID-19 are included in the scope of synthesised evidence.

INTERNATIONAL EVIDENCE

The first lesson from the COVID-19 crisis for Amal Amin is that we need more evidence-informed decision-making (EIDM). Writing for the World Economic Forum, Amin argues that EIDM is one defense against the world of misinformation, “rumours and myths”. She continues to highlight that decisions deficit of research evidence have far-reaching implications for all aspects of society.

With the COVID-19 vaccine being rolled out across the world, many researchers and implementers are trying to understand how to ensure vaccine uptake. The Norwegian Institute of Public Health has shared information briefs based on findings from Cochrane syntheses about promoting vaccine uptake among implementers and the public.

Reflecting on how COVID-19 shaped science in 2020, authors at Nature track the timeline of scientific advancement in a recent article. Month-by-month, Callaway and colleagues share how speedily research developments moved from international teams sequencing COVID-19’s genome in January to November’s World Health Organisation announcement of the production of close to 200 vaccines. The authors point out the overall shift in research culture because of COVID-19.

Hot off the press

Agley et al: ‘Misinformation about COVID-19: evidence for differential latent profiles and a strong association with trust in science’

Karimli et al: ‘More assets, more decision-making power? Mediation model in a cluster-randomized controlled trial evaluating the effect of the graduation program on women’s empowerment in Burkina Faso’

Yingling et al: ‘Explaining variation in evidence-based policy making in the American states’

Opportunities

- Multiple job opportunities available with the African Institute for Development Policy.
- Development Evaluation Training Africa course: applications opening soon!
- Apply by 12 February to be the Chair of the Board of Trustees at INASP.