

Impact of the Changing Healthcare Policy Environment on State Cancer Programs

Intelligence Brief: Rebuilding Trust in Public Health

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Background

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the growing trust deficit with public health. What the RAND Corporation has labeled as “truth decay” demonstrates growing doubts and lack of confidence around scientific facts. Health-related misinformation and disinformation on social media was notable and problematic prior to 2020, but the pandemic made it much worse.

Current Status

The pandemic has greatly shifted the healthcare delivery system. Severe workforce shortages, disruptions in care patterns, medical misinformation, and turbulence caused by coverage changes have created a disequilibrium in the care delivery system—and this disequilibrium has created a gap in trust in healthcare services.

Medical misinformation has become a particularly pervasive problem. The [deBeaumont Foundation](#) has found that “nearly three in four physicians said medical misinformation has hindered their ability to treat COVID-19 patients and has harmed patient outcomes.”

The gap in trust will impact more than just COVID-19 prevention and treatment—one study found that a person who is susceptible to online misinformation about one health area could be susceptible to many types of health misinformation.

Conclusion

To rebuild trust, public health entities can take steps to actively counteract misinformation. Prior successful public health campaigns addressing misinformation, such as [Man Therapy](#) and [Mind](#) could provide a useful template for building future campaigns that tackle health misinformation head-on.



Implications for Cancer Programs

- Cancer programs should understand the patterns of information in local markets, including media and influencers. Not all systems are facing the same challenges, and it is crucial to combat misinformation and understand its impact on patients and consumers in your market.
- Actively counteract misinformation. Do not underestimate the impact of this trend. Look to prior campaigns (i.e.: tobacco) and take it head on.

Sources

- [Physician Poll: Medical Misinformation is Harming Patients](#), de Beaumont Foundation
- [Who Is Susceptible to Online Health Misinformation?](#), American Psychological Association
- [The Implications of COVID-19 for Mental Health and Substance Use](#), Kaiser Family Foundation
- [Trust In Health Care: Insights From Ongoing Research](#), Health Affairs
- [Truth Decay](#), RAND Corporation
- [Addressing Health-Related Misinformation on Social Media](#), JAMA Network

Since 1988, the National Association of Chronic Disease Directors and its more than 7,000 Members have worked to strengthen state-based leadership and expertise for chronic disease prevention and control in all states, territories, and nationally.

The “Impact of the Changing Health Policy Environment on State Cancer Programs” project is supported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of a financial assistance award totaling \$180,000 with 100 percent funded by CDC/HHS. The contents are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement, by CDC/HHS, or the U.S. Government.

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