Don’t Believe the Hype

When claims of HIV cures grab headlines, it’s okay to be skeptical.

September 8, 2014 By Kate Ferguson

In today’s Internet age, news travels quickly, which is just what happened when recent reports incorrectly announced scientists found a molecule in ordinary soy sauce that might be useful in treating HIV. But that “news” turned out to be riddled with errors and pumped up with hype.

Last year, a British newspaper ran a headline saying “Scientists on Brink of HIV Cure.” But Ole Søgaard, one of the lead researchers from the Danish study cited in the article, shot down the announcement. “We are not on the brink of an HIV cure,” he explained. “We are making good progress, but there is still a long way to go.”

Shortly after Søgaard’s statement, the Canadian AIDS Treatment Information Exchange urged readers “to treat future media stories that claim to have news of an HIV cure with a healthy degree of skepticism.”

The Danish researchers said they believe an HIV cure is achievable but that it will most likely take many years and rounds of clinical trials.

One U.K. blogger, Tom Hayes, a.k.a. UKPositiveLad, who is the editor-in-chief of beyondpositive.org, questions how these reports influence the public.

“Could it be,” Hayes writes, “that our fascination with a possible cure, and the media’s need to shout it from the rooftop every time there’s a glimmer of hope (no matter how unsubstantiated) is causing the general public to believe we either already have a cure, or that one is just weeks or months away?”

Point well taken.

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http://beta.docker.realhealthmag.com/article/HIV-cure-headlines-26114-2818