New Facebook Feature Combats Anti-Vaccine Content

The social media platform will use pop-ups to educate users about vaccines with info from credible health agencies.

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Facebook's latest effort to reduce the spread of misinformation about vaccines involves a new feature that generates educational pop-up windows to appear. Whenever folks visit Facebook (FB) groups and pages or tap a vaccine-related hashtag on FB-owned Instagram to search for related content, these windows will offer authoritative data about these inoculations, CNN reports.

Users will be connected to accurate, science-based information on vaccines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) if they live in the United States or the World Health Organization if they live elsewhere.

"We know that parents often turn to social media to access health information and connect with other parents, and it can be difficult to determine what is accurate and who the credible sources of information are," said Kristen Nordlund, a spokesperson for the CDC.

A new Facebook feature will use educational pop-up windows to help stop the spread of vaccine misinformation.Facebook

Pop-up windows on vaccines will also appear on Instagram.Instagram

Health experts believe that anti-vaccine content online greatly contributes to a decrease in vaccinations against diseases such as measles and influenza. As a result, there's been an uptick in outbreaks of these contagious illnesses. (In April, the CDC found that 500 of the 704 people diagnosed with measles in 2019 had not been vaccinated. The number of measle diagnoses in 2019 is currently 1,234.)

Other social media platforms have also targeted vaccine misinformation. Last week, Pinterest announced that any searches for vaccine-related content would only generate results from public health organizations. Amazon also removed anti-vaccine documentaries from its streaming service, while YouTube pulled ads from videos that promote anti-vaccine content.

"Major digital organizations have a responsibility to their users—to ensure that they can access facts about vaccines and health," said Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the director-general of WHO, in a written statement. "It would be great to see social and search platforms come together to leverage their combined reach."

Click here to learn how divided U.S. adults are about vaccine safety.

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