



What are people saying

"Measles-Rubella Supplemental Immunization Activity of DOH is related to COVID-19 vaccination. Some people are afraid of this activity because they believe that this would give everyone a positive result for COVID-19."

(Municipality of Piagapo, Female, 19-25 years old)

VACCINES WILL MAKE YOU SICK AND ARE NOT SAFE FOR CHILDREN

Rumor risk level: High
Platform: Word of mouth, Social Listening

"I don't want my children to get vaccines because of rumors that vaccinated children become sick. As we heard, the injections or vaccines nowadays could weaken your immune system, and that once have it, you will have to maintain it."

(Municipality of Marantao, Female, 36-45 years old)

Rumor risk level: Medium
Platform: Word of mouth, Social Listening



"I'd rather prepare myself from death than be vaccinated because vaccination will make you sick forever and you will never be pregnant."

Rumor risk level: High
Platform: Facebook Reactions: 16
Comments: 2 Shares: 20
Followers: 2,434

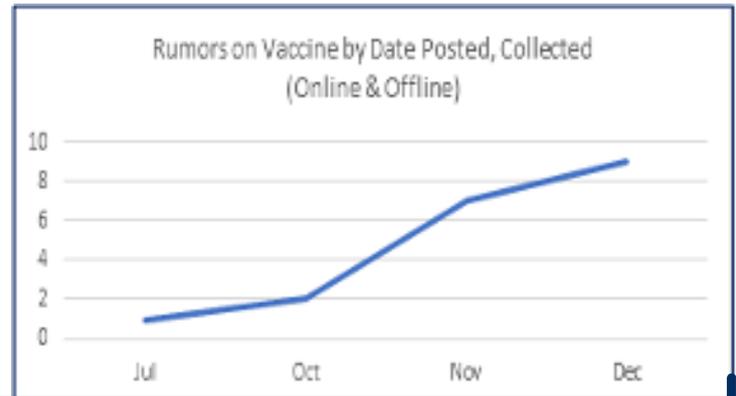
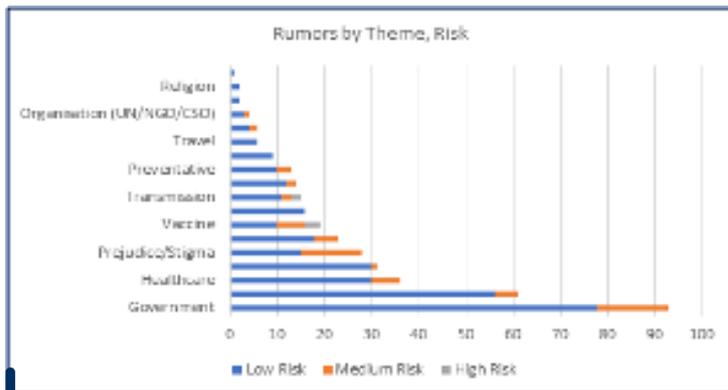


Majority of the high-risk rumors, which are potentially harmful for the community, were about vaccines. People are confused with the difference of other vaccines to COVID-19 vaccines, saying vaccines in general are deadly. They are expressing their fear for their children because of ongoing vaccination campaigns (i.e., measles, polio, etc.) in the communities which are already proven to be safe and effective. Rumors on vaccines started to peak in November due to a string of reports abroad. The recent news on COVID-19 vaccine has also raised doubts and concerns among the community.

(Trust Bangsamoro) is Rooted in Trust Philippines' biweekly rumor bulletin for media. Rooted in Trust is a global and local humanitarian response run by Internews to address the spread of rumors on COVID-19. In the Philippines, the focus is on the island of Mindanao, specifically in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM). This week's bulletin answers three rumors related to community concerns on the safety of vaccination.

WHAT ARE THE TRENDING RUMORS IN BARMM?

The most shared topics we've seen that are referring to COVID-19 are about the government – COVID-19 as hoax and healthcare (hospitals and medical workers) related rumors – from September up to the first half of December. Other trending topics include treatment and cure, prejudice and stigma, testing, vaccine, symptoms, transmissions, and COVID-19 impacts. There were 379 rumors collected from different platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Social listening, and word of mouth) from September 4 to December 16. We take a qualitative approach to rumor tracking, collecting rumors that give us an insight into community questions, trust and fears or anxieties.



A study done by Internews in BARMM showed 71% of people who have heard rumors to NOT get vaccinated, while 66% need information on COVID-19 treatments, including vaccines. A recent [survey](#) reported that nearly half of the Filipinos said they would not get vaccinated against COVID-19 and this was second most popular in Mindanao.

how to report vaccine safety

Recent developments on the COVID-19 vaccines have raised several concerns and doubts with regards to its safety. As emphasized in previous Salig Bangsamoro bulletins, vaccines undergo extensive testing and review before it is granted approval to ensure safety before it is given on a mass scale. And even after approval, continuous monitoring to spot and address mild adverse reactions is done. Side effects following vaccination is usually common, mild, and usually self-limiting.

Journalists play critical role in both providing high quality, accurate, timely and relevant information about the vaccines as they come on stream, and in contributing to a realistic management of public expectations explaining to public the intricate information on the vaccines.

Useful Readings

- **COVID-19 Glossary:** This glossary is intended for journalists, content creators, and health communicators to use to report on the COVID-19 pandemic and related issues. The information is based on rigorous science and is a useful tool for countering misinformation. The glossary terms can be accessed alphabetically, by category or cross-reference, or by search.
- **COVID-19 Journalist Guidance: How to Report Accurately on COVID-19 Vaccines.** This guideline provides terminology and the most recent scientific research and progress on COVID-19 vaccines to assist journalists reporting on the issue.
- **WHO's Science in COVID-19: How vaccines work? How do vaccines work to protect us?** What are the vaccine technologies in the pipeline and how do we ensure safe vaccines? Dr Katherine O' Brien explains in Science in 5!
- **Saying No to a Vaccine Means Saying Yes to COVID-19.** A chat with Internews Pandemic Health Journalism Mentor Adele Baleta on the importance of ensuring high uptake of COVID-19 vaccines and how journalists can help communities accept them to reach thresholds of coverage necessary to stop the transmission of the disease.

 [Click the titles to access link.](#)

The media is a key moderating force in the effort to prevent misinterpretation of the role and efficacy of the vaccines. **Here are some reporting tips on how to report vaccine safety:**

Reporting tips

1) Explain & repeat the basics

Vaccines are the single most, lifesaving and cost-effective medical intervention so far according to the World Health Organization (WHO). They reduce risks of getting a disease by working with your body's natural defenses to build protection against infections and make your immune system stronger. There is no harm in reiterating this basic on vaccines in reporting and it will give emphasis and recall to public for them to chew more complex information later.

2) Tell the differences

The COVID-19 vaccine development is unprecedented, and this causes the rise of doubts from public. The speed of trials has set off alarm bells for some people who now fear getting a vaccine. These concerns, however, affect their view on other vaccines which history had already shown us that they are proven safe. If this confusion is not addressed, a looming decline on vaccines confidence will happen again which we can't afford in this pandemic. Vaccines have been instrumental in the control, elimination, and eradication of some of the most life-threatening diseases like smallpox, polio, measles, tuberculosis, etc. In the PH, the expanded program on immunization was first established in 1976 to ensure that children and mothers have free access to routinely recommended vaccines.

Initially, the program only includes six (6) vaccine-preventable diseases - tuberculosis, diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, poliomyelitis, measles, and rubella. In 2011, the list grew to provide additional access mumps, hepatitis B, and influenza type B vaccines. Through the years, we have seen how these vaccines have proven their effectiveness in the preventing these diseases. There is no current evidence that links vaccination and increasing the risk of developing COVID-19.

Therefore, it is important to continue and to participate in routine immunization campaigns set by the local governments and the Department of Health to avoid recurring outbreaks and ensure safety of children and the community. It is important to report the differences of the vaccines to avoid blanket opinion.

3) Be clear on the side-effects

The most common side effects reported for COVID-19 vaccines include pain at the injection site, tiredness, headache, muscle pain, chills, joint pain, and fever which may last for 24 up to 48 hours according to John Hopkins Bloomberg of Public Health. In cases where allergic reactions occur, local hospitals and health centers have a system in place to monitor and address these immediately. As media, it is crucial not to misattributed side effects to avoid decline in vaccine confidence.

Furthermore, the only way to know if vaccines have serious side effects is by scientific means, through looking at the data from many vaccinated people, and by comparing them to what would be expected in particular group.

Life is risky, and some tragic events will happen after a vaccination, even when the vaccine has nothing to do with it. It is important not to jump to the conclusion that there is a connection between the vaccination and those events.

For detailed manual on surveilling the safety of the COVID-19 vaccines, you may visit WHO COVID-19 Vaccines: Safety Surveillance Manual. For real-time reporting on the adverse effects, you may visit the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report: The Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS).

4) Anecdotes backed with numbers

You may consider interviewing people in the communities who received other vaccines regarding its safety juxtapose with a story of a trial participant of COVID-19 vaccines. Provide relevant data as background and visuals to explain complex facts and ensure to properly interpret the numbers. For national to barangay breakdown of COVID-19 cases, you may refer to DOH daily Data Drop found in this link: DOH Data Drop. For tracking the historical numbers of children being vaccinated or data on the fully immunized children in the country you may refer to DOH 2019 Annual Report. You may also check data reports on the vaccine preventable disease surveillance which covers figures on measles, rubella, diphtheria, polio and others.

5) Getting it right vs getting it first

With the fast stream of information on the vaccine development, negotiation and procurement of the COVID-19 vaccines in and out the country, it is better to verify them through fully reading reports, defining technical terms and confirming through other resources. Conduct due diligence to ensure sources are credible. Any report that is unverified may add to public's hesitancy on vaccine.



We welcome your feedback, questions, and suggestions to help local media produce reliable and accurate reporting on COVID-19. **Please contact: Kia Obang, (kobang@internews.org),** Media Liaison Officer Rooted in Trust, Philippines.