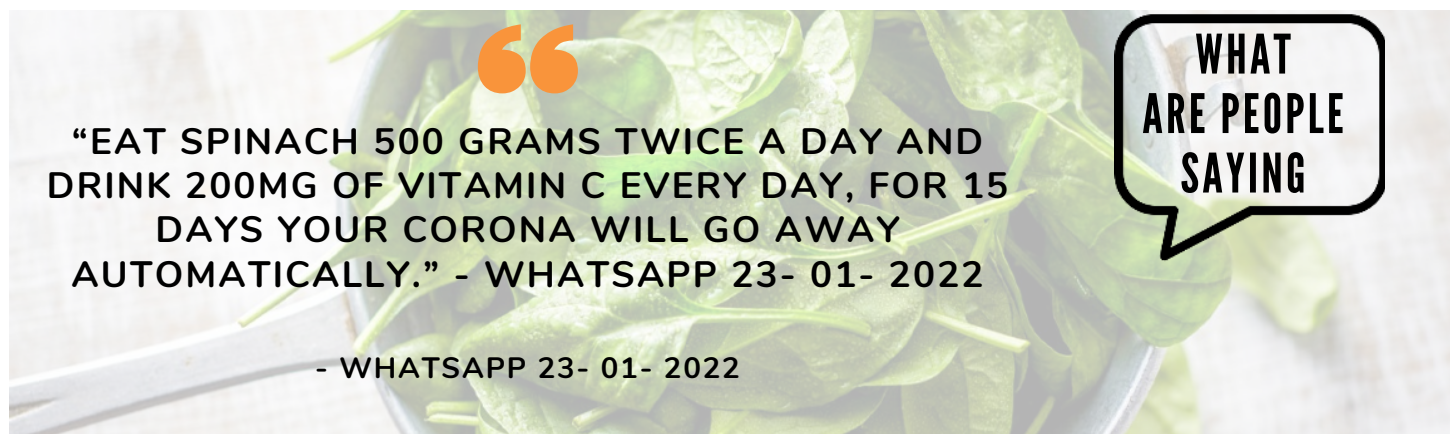




PEER TO PEER

FACTSHEET

A BI-WEEKLY RUMOR TRACKING UPDATE FOR JOURNALISTS



CONTEXT

Since the emergence of COVID-19 in Zimbabwe, the search for a solution to manage and cure the disease has continued to promote debate and misinformation on possible remedies to treat the disease.

The high cost of access to medical attention in Zimbabwe has led many people in the country to look for a variety of ways borrowed from indigenous knowledge systems such as traditional healing, steaming, use of traditional foods and herbs to manage and treat the disease.

Limited evidence on the efficacy of such non-medical treatments and the continued circulation of misinformation on COVID-19 treatment means there is need for continued information and education on recommended steps to be taken by individuals who may suspect and/or find themselves having contracted COVID-19.

This will help manage rumors and misinformation that may contribute to the increased spread of COVID19 and vaccine hesitancy.

Theme: COVID-19 treatment/Cure

Risk Ranking: Medium Risk

This rumour is ranked as a medium risk because it is likely to be believable and if taken to be true, can have a large impact on the community with people deciding to refrain from seeking medical attention when having COVID-19 symptoms.

How do we assess the risk of rumours?

The risk level will be determined based on potential to cause harm and what other negative impacts it could have on individuals, communities or service providers. In particular:

HIGH RISK: These are rumors that are likely to be believed and cause significant and immediate danger or harm to an individual, group, or the wider community.

MEDIUM RISK: Content that is very likely to be believed and cause widespread action and panic. Medium risk rumors are also those that have the potential to have a larger impact on the community and have more traction.

LOW RISK: This is rumor content that if they are believed, they will NOT pose an immediate and severe danger to an individual or the community.





WHAT ARE THE FACTS



Dr Michael Bhebhe a Biochemist at the Midlands State University (MSU)'s Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences says,

"Vitamin C is an antioxidant that mops out radicals in the body. Radicals are produced when the body is stressed by infection, exhaustion and any other form of stress. This compromises the immune system and leaves an individual susceptible to infections and spread of disease with the body. On the other hand, spinach is a source of iron and other phytochemicals. Iron increases the ability of the body to take in oxygen and distribute to all parts of the body. This advice is not curative. It is not COVID-19 specific. It is misleading as it implies that if you have COVID-19 you do not need to go to the hospital as you can eat vegetables and take vitamin C as a way of being cured. The fact of the matter is that once you have COVID-19, you must consult a health practitioner who can also probe underlying conditions that may worsen infection and lead to death."

In a statement on Vitamin and mineral supplements, World Health Organisation (WHO) has noted that, "Micronutrients, such as vitamins D and C and zinc, are critical for a well-functioning immune system and play a vital role in promoting health and nutritional well-being. There is currently no guidance on the use of micronutrient supplements as a treatment of COVID-19. WHO is coordinating efforts to develop and evaluate medicines to treat COVID-19."

Zimbabwe's Ministry of Health and Child Care (MoHCC) has maintained that there is no evidence to support the efficacy of non-medical remedies that have been suggested on local social media such as steaming, use of traditional foods, herbs and medicines which continue to remain popular.

ABOUT ROOTED IN TRUST

Rooted in Trust 2.0 is a global pandemic information response program funded by the Bureau for Humanitarian assistance (BHA/USAID) and implemented by Internews countering the unprecedented scale and speed of the spread of rumors and misinformation. COVID-19 has created chaos and confusion around the world and put vulnerable communities in more danger. Providing accurate and relevant information about COVID-19 prevention, vaccines and new strains is imperative to protect lives of communities around the world that are already suffering from marginalisation, displacements, and insecurity.

In Zimbabwe Rooted in Trust 2.0 is working with media, health, and humanitarian actors in ensuring that information disseminated is responsive to needs of communities in Southern Zimbabwe provinces of Matabeleland North, Matabeleland South, Midlands, Masvingo and Bulawayo. Focus is on marginalised communities and vulnerable groups within these communities, especially women and youth who are usually excluded in mainstream media.



“

THE FACT OF THE MATTER IS THAT ONCE YOU HAVE COVID-19, YOU MUST CONSULT A HEALTH PRACTITIONER WHO CAN ALSO PROBE UNDERLYING CONDITIONS THAT MAY WORSEN INFECTION AND LEAD TO DEATH.

TIPS FOR THE MEDIA

Use of trustworthy and reliable scientific data:

Journalists play a critical role in informing and educating the public on scientific issues and developments surrounding COVID-19 prevention practices, vaccines and drugs. It is important when reporting about such practices, vaccines and drugs, they use trustworthy and reliable sources of scientific data to inform their stories. Such data may be from research journals. The WHO' Global Research Database contains the latest international multilingual scientific findings and knowledge on COVID-19

Use of clear language to unpack science:

Scientific language from journal articles may be difficult to understand for many media readers and listeners. When writing articles or scripts for radio or television, add definitions and/explanations of complex words or words that may be unfamiliar to audiences.

Request or create open dialogue between journalists and medical experts - There is a need for the establishment of a mutually beneficial and accessible space for journalists and medical experts to enable access to credible information about the pandemic. Such space (s) curb or facilitate the control of myths, rumors and misinformation and disinformation.

HELPFUL RESOURCES AND REFERENCES

Therapeutics and COVID-19 Living Guideline

January 2022: This living [guideline](#) from WHO incorporates three new recommendations on two therapies for COVID-19 and updates existing recommendations.

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: An [Informative Guide](#) Advice for Journalists. Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) guidance document to help journalists practice responsible coverage of the pandemic using evidence-based information.

