

Monitoring health misinformation in Nigeria:

**A collection of potentially harmful
claims from Jan to April 2020**

This study was conducted by a group of researchers from the Department of Mass Communication at the University of Lagos as part of a health misinformation fact-checking project in Nigeria. It contains a collection of potentially false and harmful health claims that circulated in the public domain during the January to April 2020 period. It is the second in a series of quarterly reports that will be shared with the network of journalists, fact-checkers, health experts and policymakers to increase the uptake of evidence-based health information in Nigeria. The project is funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

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INTRODUCTION

Wardle and Derakhshand (2017) define misinformation as information that is false, but created without intent to harm. Similarly, Amobi *et al* (2019) describe misinformation as information that is false, but which the person disseminating it believes to be factual. This includes innocent sharing of made-up stories by people who believe them to be true (Cheeseman, 2019).

While misinformation is usually characterised as false information disseminated without the intent to harm, misinformation pertaining to health issues is of critical concern, particularly in Nigeria. Even though the intent of the creator or purveyor might not be outright harm, health misinformation has potentially damaging implications for the health of the population. Kim (2019) argues that widespread health misinformation is a cause for alarm, as it has the possibility to create public health crises. A prime example from Nigeria was the claim, during the 2014 Ebola virus disease outbreak, that bathing with salt water would cure Ebola. This resulted in the deaths of eight people (WHO, 2014).



Today, similar dynamics are at play with the current coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, with wide-ranging narratives that are subject to rapid change (Centre for Democracy and Development, 2020). This has been demonstrated in misinformation ranging from the claims that the new coronavirus originated from a laboratory in Wuhan, China, to COVID-19 being caused by 5G networks and the claim that the Nigerian government is lying about the existence of the coronavirus to receive debt relief from creditor nations.


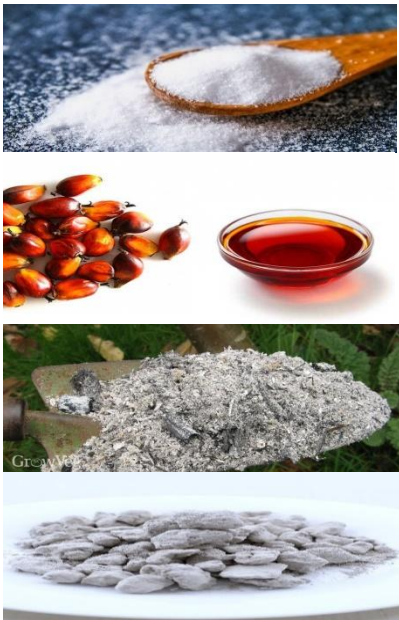

Health misinformation in Nigeria ranges from rumours, like claims that bathing with salt water will cure Ebola, to ethnically based beliefs and superstitions, such as the claim by some Yoruba people that men who eat food while it is cooking on a fire are prone to impotency, to misperceptions about causes of diseases and illnesses, their modes of transmission and treatment, and the herbal concoctions which can treat them. Social media gives people without medical backgrounds and self-proclaimed “herbal” doctors the ability to disseminate health misinformation to a wide range of people, and exacerbates the risks posed by it.

The result of health misinformation can be deadly, ranging from a patient suffering unnecessarily and protractedly from a treatable condition to outbreaks of an entirely preventable disease (Kaltwasser, 2019). There is a dire need for rapid verifications of claims and awareness of the dangerous implications of health misinformation. This research sought to identify the prevalent examples of health misinformation in Nigeria, what motivated their creation and the potential harm to the consumers of such messages. It covers the circulation of false health claims for the period January to April 2020 and was guided by the following research questions:

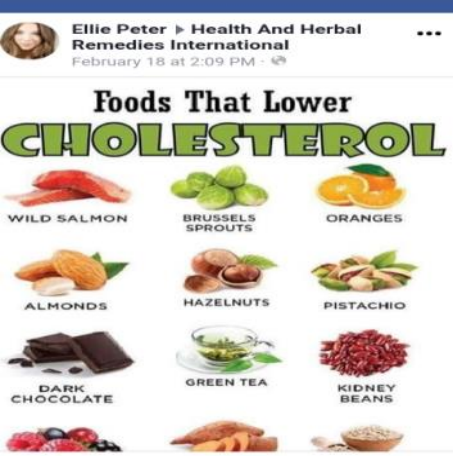

1. What are the prevalent examples of health misinformation in Nigeria?
2. What are the sources and channels of dissemination of health misinformation in Nigeria?
3. What are the motives behind the formulation and spread of health misinformation in Nigeria?
4. What are the potential harms of health misinformation in Nigeria?

COMMUNITY BELIEFS



| Brief description of claim | Origin and platform circulated on | Motivation for dissemination | Potential harm |
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| <p><i>Basil</i> (known as <i>Efirin</i> in Yoruba, <i>Nchanwu</i> in Igbo) is believed to be effective in the treatment of high blood pressure.</p>  | <p>This is a common belief among Yoruba people, many of whom believe in herbal cures. The claim was also circulated on WhatsApp.</p> | <p>To provide traditional alternatives for the treatment of high blood pressure and to promote the Nigerian traditional health sector.</p> | <p>The propagators of the claim do not provide directives as to who should and should not consume the leaf, and since the treatment is not subjected to any scientific laboratory testing, the potential risks and side effects for the consumer are unknown.</p> |
| <p>It is believed that the juice of <i>Basil</i>(known as <i>Efirin</i> in Yoruba, <i>Nchanwu</i> in Igbo),<i>Bitter leaf</i>(<i>Vernonia Amygdalina</i>, known as <i>Onugbu</i> in Igbo),<i>Gongronema Latifolium</i>(known as <i>Utazi</i> in Igbo), and <i>Moringa</i>(known as <i>Odudu Oyibo</i> in Igbo, <i>Zogale</i> in Hausa, <i>Ewe Ile</i> in Yoruba)are effective in the treatment of stomach disorder.</p>  | <p>This is a common belief among Yoruba people, many of whom believe in herbal cures. The claim was also circulated on WhatsApp.</p> | <p>To provide traditional alternatives for the treatment of stomach disorders and to promote the Nigerian traditional health sector.</p> | <p>The propagators of the claim do not provide directives as to who should and should not consume the juices, and since the treatment is not subjected to any scientific laboratory testing, the potential risks and side effects for the consumer are unknown.</p> |


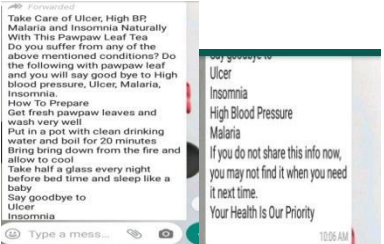

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| <p>It is believed that palm oil heated on red-hot knife can be used to disinfect and cure a puncture wound caused by sharp objects like nails, pins, or glass on the fingers, toes or sole of the feet.</p>  | <p>This is a common belief among Igbo people in Southeast Nigeria.</p> | <p>To provide traditional alternatives for the treatment of wounds and to promote the Nigerian traditional health sector.</p> | <p>This could mislead and has not been proven to prevent or treat infections.</p> |
| <p>It is believed that a paste made of <i>palm oil</i> (known as <i>Nmanu</i> in Igbo), <i>edible potash</i>(<i>Akanwu</i> in Igbo), <i>wood ash</i>(<i>Ntu</i> in Igbo) and <i>salt</i> (<i>Nnu</i> in Igbo) can be effective in the treatment of boils, painful pus-filled bumps under the skin, caused by infected or inflamed hair follicles.</p>  | <p>This is a common belief among Igbo people in Southeast Nigeria.</p> | <p>To provide traditional alternatives for the treatment of boils and to promote the Nigerian traditional health sector.</p> | <p>This could mislead and has not been proven to treat infections.</p> |
| <p>It is believed that coconut water can neutralise poison.</p>  | <p>This is a common belief among Igbo people in Southeast Nigeria.</p> | <p>To provide traditional treatment for poisoning and to promote the Nigerian traditional health sector.</p> | <p>This could mislead consumers, as it lacks scientific merit.</p> |




SOCIAL MEDIA HEALTH MISINFORMATION FACEBOOK



| Brief description of claim | Origin and platform circulated on | Motivation for dissemination | Potential harm |
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| <p>It is claimed that various foods, including <i>wild salmon, Brussel sprout, oranges, almonds, hazelnuts, green tea</i> and <i>dark chocolate</i>, lower cholesterol. See image below:</p>  <p>The same Facebook user also shared a post claiming that eating apples, almonds, lemons and drinking milk daily will protect a person from needing medical attention, cancer, gaining weight and “bone problems”.</p> | <p>This first claim was posted by a Facebook user on a Facebook group known as “Health and Herbal remedies international”.</p> <p>The second claim was posted by the same Facebook user, from an account called “Health Young Smiles”</p> | <p>The writer’s motivation may derive from the need to stay relevant as a custodian of health information. This is underscored by her membership of health groups, from where she may source additional health information to disseminate to the public.</p> | <p>The danger in using information from social media groups is that it is often unverified and lacks scientific evidence. Such information may lead to consumers’ dependence on the listed foods to lower cholesterol and deter them from seeking tested and trustworthy medical attention, when needed.</p> |
| <p>It is claimed that <i>garlic</i> can cure COVID-19. See image below:</p>  | <p>The claim was posted on Facebook</p> | <p>The ongoing debate over what drug is most effective in the treatment of COVID-19 appears to be driving the rapid development and spread of local “miracle” remedies.</p> | <p>Just as HIV-Aids and Ebola patients suffered stigmatisation, a similar trend is emerging around COVID-19. In order to remain anonymous, some people would rather use herbal remedies. This may lead to serious health complications and death.</p> |

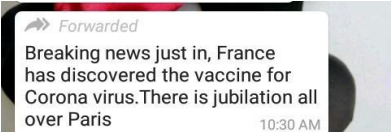
WHATSAPP


| Brief description of claim | Origin and platform circulated on | Motivation for dissemination | Potential harm |
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| <p>There are multiple claims of Chinese people in Osoba in Gowon Estate, Egbeda, Lagos state having severe symptoms of COVID-19. See image below:</p>  <p>The screenshot shows a forwarded WhatsApp message with the following text: "Breaking News: Verified Information... There are multiple reports of Chinese People in Osoba Close in Gowon Estate having severe symptoms of Corona Virus. These Chinese newly returned from Wuhan in China and are treating themselves of symptoms similar to that of a Coronavirus patient in Gowon Estate, Egbeda. Kindly advice and forward to any of your family members or relations to avoid going near any shop, office or Business where Chinese people are gathered at".</p> | <p>Claims circulated on many WhatsApp accounts.</p> | <p>The lessons of the deadliness of Ebola virus disease that ravaged some West African countries, including Nigeria to a limited extent, may be generating fear in people, since the index case was a foreigner.</p> | <p>It could lead to the stigmatisation of Chinese people in general and boycotting of their businesses, especially in the Egbeda area of Lagos, thus depressing the economy of the state.</p> |
| <p>It was claimed that there were cases of the coronavirus in Lekki, Lagos state. See image below:</p>  <p>The screenshot shows a WhatsApp chat conversation with the following messages: "There is an unconfirmed report that the Coronavirus has reach Lagos, Nigeria. 17:05", "Precisely, Lekki 17:06", "As team leaders, let us act wisely with our team members 17:06", "Hand sanitizer should be used across the office and we may need office masks at some point 17:06", "A man just returned from China and has been quarantined at Britannia Hospital, Lekki for symptoms of Coronavirus 17:07", "I'm surprised that our government couldn't suspend flights to and from China within this period when the WHO had declared yesterday a Global Emergency because of the spread of the virus 17:08", "So, please treat this information with caution and act wisely 17:08".</p> | <p>Claim was circulated on WhatsApp.</p> | <p>News about the deadliness of COVID-19 may be generating fear in people, giving rise to rumours.</p> | <p>It could lead to the stigmatisation of Lekki residents and boycotting of businesses in the area, thus depressing the economy of Lagos state.</p> |
| <p>It is claimed that a Japanese doctor has advice on how to identify and treat COVID-19. See image below:</p> | <p>Claim was circulated on several WhatsApp groups.</p> | <p>The reports of how COVID-19 is ravaging the world, without any vaccine for prevention, are generating fear and leading to the spread of rumours. This is</p> | <p>It could lead to panic and fear amongst people, who may believe that they have the virus, when they do not.</p> |




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| <p>The new NCP coronavirus may not show sign of infection for many days then how can one know if he/she is infected? Latest information is that the incubation period may be upto 14 days before the symptoms of COVID-19 are evident.</p> <p>By the time a person has fever and/or cough and goes to the hospital, the lungs are usually 90% fibrosis and it's too late!</p> <p>Taiwan experts provide a simple self-check that we can do every morning:</p> <p>Take a deep breath and hold your breath for more than 10 seconds. If you complete it successfully without coughing, without discomfort, tightness or tightness, etc., it proves there is no fibrosis in the lungs, basically indicating no infection.</p> <p>In critical times, please self-check every morning in an environment with clean air!</p> <p>SERIOUS EXCELLENT ADVICE by Japanese doctors treating COVID-19 cases. Everyone should ensure their mouth is moist, never DRY.</p> <p>Take a few sips of water every 15 mins at least. Why?</p> <p>Once if the virus does enter into your mouth...drinking water or other liquids will WASH them down through your oesophagus and into the stomach.</p> <p>Once there, your stomach acids will kill the virus.</p> <p>If you don't drink enough water more regularly...the virus can enter your windpipes and into the LUNGS. That's very dangerous.</p> <p>Pls send and share with family, friends and everyone about this!</p> <p>Take care everyone & may the world recover from corona virus soon.</p> <p>May sound health be our portion all over Africa</p>  | | <p>compounded by the debates on which drug(s) is most effective in the treatment of the disease.</p> | |
| <p>It is claimed that juice extracted from pawpaw leaves (also known as papaya) can cure high blood pressure, ulcers, malaria and insomnia. See images below:</p>  | <p>Claim was circulated on WhatsApp.</p> | <p>To provide traditional treatment for these ailments.</p> | <p>Individuals with any of the listed ailments may depend solely on the traditional remedy instead of seeking medical attention. This may lead to serious health complications and death.</p> |
| <p>It is claimed that <i>Ibuprofen</i> (also known as Advil) makes COVID-19 ten times worse. See image below:</p>  | <p>Claim was circulated on WhatsApp.</p> | <p>Motivation may be to warn people against taking ibuprofen to treat the symptoms of covid-19, for fear it may make them more ill.</p> | <p>Claim does not include any research evidence and could misinform those suffering from or treating someone with COVID-19.</p> |
| <p>It is claimed that the pH of the new coronavirus ranges from 5.5 to 8.5 and that it can be defeated by alkaline foods with higher pH levels, such as Mangoes, Oranges and Avocadoes. It is also claimed that Lime and Lemon juice can be used as a natural hand sanitiser. See image below:</p> | <p>Claim circulated on WhatsApp.</p> | <p>Possibly to suggest natural remedies for the treatment of COVID-19.</p> | <p>This claim is not evidence based and may mislead readers into adopting the remedy. This may lead to serious health complications and death.</p> |


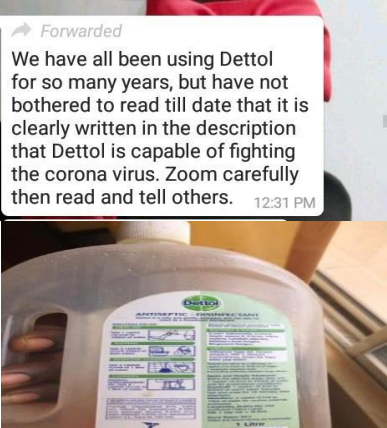
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| <p>RESEARCH: JOURNAL OF VIROLOGY, APRIL 1991, PAGE 1916</p> <p>All we need to do, to beat corona virus, we need to take more of alkaline foods that are above the above pH level of the Virus.</p> <p>Some of which are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lemon - 9.9pH Lime - 8.3pH Avocado - 15.6pH Garlic - 13.2pH Mango - 8.7pH Tangerine - 8.5pH Pineapple - 12.7pH Dandelion - 22.7pH Orange - 9.2pH <p>How do you know you have coronavirus?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Itching in the throat, 2. Dry throat, 3. Dry cough. <p>So where you notice these three things quickly take warm water and drink.</p> <p>Your Good Health Is My Priority</p> <p>Please note that your lime and lemon can serve as a natural hand sanitizer. Squeeze some of its juice and rub on your hands. Its acidic content is high as seen above and the virus cannot survive in an acidic environment.</p> <p>Do not keep this information to yourself only. Pass it to all your family and friends. God bless you.</p> | | | |
| <p>It is claimed that Dogonyaro (<i>Azadirachta indica</i>, or <i>Neem</i>); <i>Ewe Oruwo</i> (<i>Morina lucida</i>); <i>Egbo Egbesi</i> or <i>Nauclea latifolia</i>, in English, (<i>Ubulu inu</i>) in Igbo and (<i>Tabasiya</i>) in Hausa; can be used in the treatment of COVID-19. See image below:</p>  | <p>Claim was circulated on WhatsApp groups.</p> | <p>To possibly provide local remedies for a disease with no known vaccine or guaranteed treatment.</p> | <p>Such a claim can mislead the public and put users' lives at risk.</p> |
| <p>It is claimed that a woman and her children were cured from COVID-19 by taking <i>Paracetamol</i> and a mixture of garlic, ginger, turmeric and honey. See image below:</p>  | <p>Claim was circulated on various WhatsApp groups.</p> | <p>Perhaps to provide possible treatment for what the woman believed to be COVID-19.</p> | <p>This claim appears to be misleading, especially as some of her claims are false. For example, she claimed that the adult dosage of 500mg paracetamol is one tablet. This is false as shown in the images below:</p>  |

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|  <p>Did your children also have it and how did you treat them</p> <p>Yes the baby got it. We gave him BABY paracetamol every 4 hours. NEVER EVER give your children adult paracetamol. You will NEVER be able to dilute it enough.</p> <p>Oh no I had it 3 weeks ago. What terrible thing to experience, hope you're all doing better now.</p> <p>There was no need to go to the hospital. If you are healthy and not pregnant. Stay home and take paracetamol symptoms are worse on day 8 to 11. After that your body will fight the virus and you will feel better.</p> | | |  <p>If she was ill, she may have suffered from a minor cold or flu, which resolved after the virus completed its course, but some consumers of the message may believe she had COVID-19 and follow her advice. This may lead to serious health complications and death.</p> |
| <p>It is claimed that the World Health Organization’s recipe for standard hand sanitiser includes hydrogen peroxide, glycerine in rose water, methylated spirits and water. Exact instructions are given.</p> | <p>Claim circulated on several WhatsApp groups.</p> | <p>The claim may have been motivated by the urge to help reduce the cost of hand sanitiser.</p> | <p>The danger is unknown. However, the recipe recommended by WHO was for “hand rub” and differs from the claim. See link.</p> |
| <p>It is claimed that respiratory failure is the major cause of death amongst COVID-19 patients. It is also claimed that the virus can be controlled by drinking regularly hot liquids, putting turmeric in hot water and, doing gargles with salt, turmeric or any other oral</p> | <p>Claim circulated on several WhatsApp groups.</p> | <p>The reports of deaths from COVID-19 are generating fear and desperation, giving rise to rumours and misinformation, some from quack health practitioners.</p> | <p>It could mislead people into following the instructions and ignoring medically supported interventions.</p> |



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| antiseptic, eating fruits with high vitamin C. And lastly, disinfect self with alcohol-based substance. | | | |
| It is claimed that “France” has discovered the vaccine for the new coronavirus. See image below:  | Claim circulated on several WhatsApp groups. | Possibly to reduce panic in the country. | This claim may raise false hope. |
| Popular Nollywood actor Jerry Amilo has claimed in a video that face masks imported from China to Nigeria are infected with COVID-19, as were the masks China sold to the Netherlands and Italy. He urges Nigerians to refrain from buying and wearing face masks, especially while driving. See video link . | The video circulated on the several WhatsApp groups. | Amilo may have been motivated by fear of COVID-19, and conspiracy theories circulating about China’s plans to reduce the population of Africa. | As a popular and respected actor, Amilo’s a role model to many who may believe his message and reject not only face masks, but other preventative or curative items from China, including drugs. This may lead to serious health complications and death. |
| It is claimed that COVID-19 can be treated with the drugs hydroxychloroquine, azithromycin and zinc sulphate, which have been approved for use by the US Food and Drug Administration. | The claim circulated on several WhatsApp groups. | Following reports about the trials of some of these drugs in various countries, the creator of the message may have wished to help spread the cure for COVID-19. | Consumers of the message may be tempted to try out the drugs instead of seeking medical attention if infected by the new coronavirus. |
| <i>Siam weed (C. Odorata, known as Ewe Akintola in Yoruba)</i> is claimed to be a remedy for COVID-19. Instructions are given for how to prepare a tincture or tea from the plant, also called <i>mint leaf, Sekou Toure</i> or <i>Acheampong</i> . | The claim was made by the well-known prophetess Dupe Oluwaniyi, in a video circulated on several WhatsApp groups. See video link . | Possibly to provide herbal remedy for COVID-19. | Such a claim may mislead vulnerable and desperate people into using <i>Siam weed</i> as treatment for COVID-19. |
| It has been claimed that COVID-19 can be cured by drinking water boiled with chopped <i>garlic</i> . | Claim circulated on several WhatsApp groups. | Garlic is widely accepted as a cure-all for all ailments. There being no orthodox treatment for COVID-19 yet may have motivated the content creator to claim that garlic can cure it. | Such a claim may mislead vulnerable and desperate people into using Garlic as a treatment for COVID-19. This may lead to serious health complications and death. |

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| <p>It is claimed that the new coronavirus is spreading through used clothes originating from Europe. Nigerians are caution against wearing used clothes (flip-flops or dodo).</p> | <p>Claim circulated on several WhatsApp groups.</p> | <p>Possibly to provide preventative measures against the spread of the new coronavirus.</p> | <p>Second-hand clothes from European countries is popular. Such a message may therefore discourage users from buying used clothing, depressing business and limiting the sources of clothing for many families.</p> |
| <p>It is claimed that drinking warm water and gargling salt water are effective preventive measures against the new coronavirus</p> | <p>Claim circulated several WhatsApp groups.</p> | <p>Possibly driven by the desire to provide homemade remedies to prevent the new coronavirus.</p> | <p>Believing the claim might lead people to ignore the preventative measures prescribed by medical experts and the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control.</p> |
| <p>It is claimed that scientists at the University of Ibadan have recommended a plant called <i>Euphorbia Hirta</i> (known as <i>Ba ala</i> in Igbo, <i>Akunesan</i> in Yoruba, <i>Nononkurciya</i> in Hausa and <i>Asin uloko</i> in Edo) as herbal alternative for mitigating some of the diseases associated with COVID-19. See image below:</p>  | <p>Claim circulated on several WhatsApp groups, and also posted on the PRECISION website.</p> | <p>Possible motivation may be there being no orthodox treatment for COVID-19 yet, and the desire to gain popularity on social media through providing herbal alternative.</p> | <p>The potency of this remedy is unclear, and may put the lives of users at serious risk.</p> |
| <p>It is claimed that the new coronavirus is manmade and targeted at reducing the population of the world; it has little or no effect on Africans. Furthermore, it is claimed that there is a plan to inject Africans with the virus through a vaccine. As such African should not take the Vaccine for the prevention of the virus or injection from WHO. See image below:</p> | <p>Claim circulated on several WhatsApp groups.</p> | <p>The writer might be motivated by rumours circulating about the Chinese planning to reduce the population of Africa in order to “recolonise” its people.</p> | <p>Belief in the claim that the virus has little or no effect on Africans may make people undermine the safety measures prescribed by medical experts.</p> |

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| <p>BREAKING... Pls my people do not receive any form of vaccine for the prevention of corona virus nor any form of injection from WHO, world health org, be very careful because this virus is a man made virus targeted to reduce the population of the world but unfortunately it has no or little effect on Africans. Now they are angry and in a plan to carry out there evil plans, they have resulted to sending the virus itself to Africans in d name of the vaccine. if u hear and doesn't let ur brother know, u have failed to protect a life, Very soon people will be directed to start taking the vaccine, don't say u didn't hear or see this message, save your families.</p> <p>share pls 1:16 PM</p> | | | |
| <p>It is claimed that five hospitals have been closed down due to their exposure to COVID-19, while prior visitors to the hospitals are required to call the NCDC.</p> <p><i>Forwarded</i> </p> <p>Dear All,</p> <p>We have received information that due to the COVID-19 exposure the following Lagos hospitals have suspended operations until further notice:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. St. Edwards Hospital, Ajah Lagos. 2. Premier Specialist Hospital, Victoria Island, Lagos. 3. Vedic Lifecare Hospital, Lekki Lagos. 4. First Cardiology Consultants Hospital, Ikoyi, Lagos. 5. County Hospital, Ogba Lagos. <p>Consequently, all staff and/or family members who may have visited the hospital or staff who may have been in contact with anyone who visited any of the above-listed hospitals between April 10th, 2020 and April 19th 2020, are required to immediately call NCDC HOTLINE. ★ 6:58 AM</p> <p>Although one of the listed hospitals published a rejoinder, and TVC also debunked the claim, the true situation is unclear.</p> | <p>Claims circulated on several WhatsApp groups.</p>   | <p>Motivation is unclear.</p> | <p>This might create panic and fear in people and stop patients from seeking medical attention at the listed hospitals.</p> |
| <p>It is claimed that president Buhari and his chief-of-staff Abba Kyari both tested positive for COVID-19. See image below, with</p> | <p>Claim circulated on several WhatsApp groups.</p> | <p>Motivation can be ascribed to the disclosure of Abba Kyari's, who was close to President Buhari that he tested positive for COVID-19. He has since died of the disease.</p> | <p>This claim is capable of creating panic and fear in the minds Nigerians.</p> |

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| <p>manipulated text in chyron:</p>  | | | |
| <p>It is claimed that <i>Dettol</i>, an antiseptic soap and liquid, kills the new coronavirus. See image below:</p>  | <p>Claim circulated on several WhatsApp groups.</p> | <p>There is no orthodox cure for coronavirus yet. This may drive the motivation to provide a cure for coronavirus.</p> | <p>This tweet can mislead individuals, who believe the claim, into consuming Dettol which puts them at risk.</p> |
| <p>A popular Nigerian pastor has claimed that 5G, the new generation of wireless communication, is responsible for the coronavirus crisis. See video link.</p> | <p>The claim was made by pastor Chris Oyakhilome, founder of the Christ Embassy International, in a video interview. The video circulated on several WhatsApp groups and traditional news media.</p> | <p>The pastor's motivation is unclear. One can only assume that he probably intends to create public distrust of government, thus encouraging members of his church to challenge government's lockdown policies, one of which is a ban on religious gatherings.</p> | <p>Such a claim is capable of creating public distrust of government and lead to disobedience of its lockdown and social distancing policies.</p> |
| <p>It is claimed that onions can cure COVID-19 and that breathing in onions can also cure cough and mild asthma. It is stated that the remedy was originally prescribed for pneumonia from the book <i>Kitchen Medicine</i> by Julie Bruton-Seal and Matthew Seal.</p> | <p>This claim was made in a video clip, by a woman who claimed to have cured her COVID-19 symptoms with <i>onion</i>. This video circulated widely on WhatsApp.</p> | <p>This claim may have been motivated by the urge for relevance in the quest for a cure for the deadly COVID-19.</p> | <p>Although the woman says she is not a medical expert, and cannot guarantee the remedy, the claim may cause those experiencing COVID-19 symptoms to attempt the same, rather than seeking prompt medical attention.</p> |

INSTAGRAM

| Brief description of claim | Origin and platform circulated on | Motivation for dissemination | Potential harm |
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| <p>It is claimed <i>turmeric milk</i> improves digestion, fights cold and cough, cures insomnia, purifies blood, detoxifies the liver and lowers cancer risk. See image below:</p>  | <p>The claim was posted on the Instagram page @glamwhiz.health.</p> | <p>In addition to the general belief that turmeric possesses many health benefits, the claim may also have been motivated by the desire to gain more followers on Instagram.</p> | <p>This might drive people to depend solely on turmeric milk to treat the ailments listed instead of seeking prompt medical attention.</p> |
| <p>It is claimed that various home remedies quickly get rid of skin pores on the face. See image:</p>  <p>Remedy 1: Mix 2 tablespoons of yoghurt, ½ tablespoon of chicken pea flour, and ¼ spoon of rose water. Apply to the face, and let it stay for 20 minutes before washing it off.</p> <p>Remedy 2: Mix 2 tablespoons of Aloe vera, 2 pinches of coffee powder and olive oil. Apply on face and let it stay overnight.</p> | <p>The claim was posted on the Instagram page @beauty.tipss01.</p> | <p>To provide natural treatment for visible pores and to gain more followers on Instagram.</p> | <p>The authenticity of this claim is questionable.</p> |

It is claimed that mixtures of salt and milk, flour and honey, and turmeric and flour can be used for a number of cosmetic goals, including lightening the skin and preventing acne. See image below:





Claim was posted on the Instagram page [@beautifulyoutips](https://www.instagram.com/beautifulyoutips).

It was also posted on the Instagram page [@fashionartdiy](https://www.instagram.com/fashionartdiy).

Possibly to provide natural remedies for women who want to lighten their skin complexion or cure skin problems but are afraid of using chemical substances. Furthermore, to gain more followers on Instagram.



The claims are not evidence based and it is unclear how safe the mixtures are when used on the skin.

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| <p>It is claimed that the fruit <i>Thespesia</i> or <i>AzanzaGarckeana</i> (also known as <i>Silky kola</i> or <i>Goron Tula</i> in Hausa) cures a variety of ailments, including cough, malaria and “genital problems”, and can serve as an aphrodisiac.</p>  | <p>The claim was posted on the Instagram page @lexbeautyworld.</p> | <p>To promote sales and to gain more followers on Instagram.</p> | <p>It might lead people to rely solely on <i>Gorontula</i> to cure the listed ailments rather than seeking appropriate and prompt medical care.</p> |
| <p>It is claimed that according to the WHO over 800,000 people die yearly from suicide and that suicide is the second cause of deaths in 15 to 29-year olds. See image below:</p>  | <p>Claim was posted by @SriGeorgeOm on Instagram It was reposted by instablog9ja on Instagram.</p> | <p>To possibly create awareness about suicide among youths and perhaps to remain relevant as a news blog as well as gain more followers on Instagram.</p> | <p>There is a disparity between the statistics posted by @SriGeorgeOm and those from Befrienders Worldwide, an online volunteer organisation, which gives the figure from WHO at approximately one million.</p> <p>While the disparity may not be significant, it is often preferable to use exact statistics.</p> |

TELEGRAM



| Brief description of claim | Origin and platform circulated on | Motivation for dissemination | Potential harm |
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| It is claimed that the new coronavirus cannot withstand high temperatures, based on “scientifically proven results” obtained from countries including Nigeria. | The claim was posted on a professional group page on Telegram. | This may be motivated by the spread of the virus having been relatively slow in Africa. | The post claims to be evidence based, but the source is unknown, thus, the claim cannot be verified. People stand the risk of under estimating the severity of the virus. |

WEBSITES

| Brief description of claim | Origin and platform circulated on | Motivation for dissemination | Potential harm |
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| It is claimed that a local herbal concoction made from herbs and roots of specific trees, called <i>Agbo</i> in Yoruba, can cure several ailments including malaria, typhoid, haemorrhoids, measles, chicken pox and stomach ache.  | The claim was published on a website called L'AMS Herbal Tree . | To possibly increase traffic on the blog, promote and boost sales of the product. | The effectiveness of the product has not been proven, while the side effects and irritations are unknown. There may be health risks. |
| It is claimed that the unnamed herbal mixture in the image below, cures haemorrhoids or piles, known as <i>Jedi-Jedi</i> or <i>Opa-Eyinin</i> in Yoruba.  | The claim was posted on the Nairaland blog . | Possibly to market and increase sales of products. | The product and its composition are unnamed. It also appears not to have been approved by the country's National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC). The health risks are therefore unknown. |
| It is claimed a Nigerian professor of virology has discovered a cure for new coronavirus and Lassa fever. The professor says the therapy has already proven reliable in the “treatment of HIV-Aids”. | The claim was posted on Linda Ikeji's blog . | Possibly to provide a cure for COVID-19. | The “treatment” has yet to be approved by any health regulatory body. It may give consumers false hope and put the lives of patients who adopt the treatment at risk. |



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| <p>It is claimed that “Vantage Herbs” tea helps reverse hypertension and reverse and normalise blood-sugar levels within a few weeks.</p>  | <p>The claim was posted at this link.</p> | <p>Possibly to popularise, market and increase sales of the product, and increase traffic to the blog.</p> | <p>It is claimed that the herbal tea is “scientifically proven”, but no details of any research are included in the post. Therefore, the truthfulness of the claim is under question. Hypertensive and diabetic patients who adopt the remedy may be doing so at the risk of their lives.</p> |
| <p>It is claimed that a natural herbal remedy, UG Capsules and Akum Tea, is “scientifically proven” by doctors and researchers to reverse type 2 diabetes and normalise blood-sugar levels without using prescription drugs or insulin injections. See image below:</p>  | <p>The claim was made by a self-proclaimed “underground health researcher” in a blog post published at this link.</p> | <p>Possibly to increase traffic on the blog, and popularise, promote and boost sales of the product.</p> | <p>It is claimed that the concoction is “scientifically proven”, but no details of any research are included in the post. Therefore, the truthfulness of the claim is under question. Hypertensive and diabetic patients who adopt the remedy may be risking their lives.</p> |
| <p>It is claimed that the hantavirus has started killing people in China.</p> | <p>The claim was published on a blog at this link.</p> | <p>China has been blamed globally for the coronavirus which is ravaging the world, the anger may therefore, be a motivating factor.</p> | <p>The claim could cause panic among Nigerians, especially in the face of the coronavirus pandemic.</p> |
| <p>It is claimed that a solution made from garlic, aloe vera and other plants can be used to treat diabetes, high cholesterol and high blood pressure. See image:</p>  | <p>The claim was published on a blog at this link.</p> | <p>Possibly to market and increase sales of products.</p> | <p>The post says: “if you have Diabetes, you simply cannot continue this way - sooner rather than later you WILL die; either from Diabetes, its complications, or side-effects from the drugs you take.” The fear appeal in the message may persuade people to buy a product that may have little benefit.</p> |
| <p>It is claimed that a mixture called <i>Panchagavya</i> used in traditional Hindu rituals can be used to fight</p> | <p>Claim published at this link. It also circulated on Twitter.</p> | <p>Motivation may be to promote traditional Hindu remedies.</p> | <p>The mixture has not been tested as a potential cure for COVID-19, which puts users at risk. While</p> |


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| the spread of COVID-19. It is made of cow dung, urine, milk, Curd and Ghee. See image below: | | | cow urine and cow dung have benefits as fertilisers, researchers have debunked any claims of them curing diseases. |
| It is claimed that the fruits, seeds, nuts and barks of bitter kola can be used to treat many ailments, including “lung function”, malaria, glaucoma and obesity. | The claim was published at this link . | The claim may be motivated by the general belief that bitter kola is medicinal. | People who adopt this untested remedy may be risking their lives. |
| It is claimed that a Chinese pulmonologist Zhong Nanshan has said that gargling salt water before going to the hospital and public places will prevent the new coronavirus. | The claim circulated on WhatsApp and Wikipedia . | Possibly to provide preventative measures against COVID-19. | This claim may mislead individuals. |
| It is claimed that a herbal mixture made from pineapple peels, lime and ginger can cure COVID-19. | The claim was posted on a blog at this link . It was also circulated on Opera News website . It was further shared on WhatsApp. | To provide a plant-based remedy for COVID-19. | Individuals infected with the virus may depend solely on the herbal remedy that has not been approved by the appropriate bodies, thus risking their lives. |
| A Nigerian alternative medicine practitioner has claimed to have found a cure for COVID-19. | The claim was made by the Provost of <i>Luminar International College of Alternative Medicine</i> , Enugu and posted at this link . | To possibly become relevant in the debate surrounding the cure for COVID-19 and also drive traffic on the website. | It may lead individuals to trust the remedy which has not been proven to be effective. |
| A Nigerian herbalist has claimed to have “anti- coronavirus plants” in her garden. | The claim was made by Flora Ilonze and published on Tori.ng . | To drive traffic to the blog and promote the traditional medicine practice. | It may falsely raise hope and lead people to search for the plants. |
| A traditional medicine practitioner has claimed users of skin-lightening creams that contain steroids are more likely to have severe illness or die from COVID-19. | The claim was made by “AprokoDocotor” and posted at this link . It also circulated on WhatsApp | Possibly to discourage people from using skin-lightening creams. | It may cause fear amongst users of skin-lightening creams. |

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| <p>It is claimed that drinking a concoction made from onion, garlic and ginger can treat arthritis, rheumatism and pain. See image below:</p>  | <p>The claim was published on Opera News.</p> | <p>The widespread belief in the efficacy of garlic, ginger and onions may have motivated the claim.</p> | <p>It might encourage people not to seek prompt medical attention and instead focus on the plant-based remedy, which has not been scientifically tested.</p> |
| <p>It is claimed that <i>Ocimum gratissimum</i> or Scent leaf (<i>Nchanwu</i> in Igbo) boiled with garlic can be used to treat sexually transmitted diseases such as gonorrhoea and other bacterial and fungal infections. See image below:</p>  | <p>The claim was published on Opera News.</p> | <p>Scent leaf is believed to be a potent treatment for several ailments, which may have motivated the claim.</p> | <p>This claim may mislead people into having misguided trust in the leaf.</p> |

NEWSPAPERS (HARD COPY)

| Brief description of claim | Origin and platform circulated on | Motivation for dissemination | Potential harm |
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| <p>It is claimed that pineapple peels are a rich source of antioxidants and help protect people from heart disease, arthritis and various cancers, as well as aiding in weight loss. See image below:</p> | <p>The claim was made by Funke Adebayo and published in the Health Digest column of the Daily Sun newspaper on January 25, 2020, page 14, titled <i>Health Benefits of Pineapples</i>.</p> | <p>To promote good health and dietary habits to prevent diseases. The Health Digest is a regular column trusted by readers.</p> | <p>Belief in the claim could lead to a total dependence on pineapple peels instead of seeking appropriate and prompt medical attention.</p> |

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| <p>A medical expert has claimed that every day in Nigeria, 32 women die of breast cancer, 28 women die of cervical cancer and 16 men die of prostate cancer. See image below:</p>  | <p>The claim was made by Dr Abia Nzelu and published in the Daily Sun newspaper on February 6, 2020, pages 21 and 22.</p> | <p>To create awareness among readers about the danger and prevalence of various cancers in Nigeria.</p> | <p>It is unclear if the figures given by Dr Nzelu are correct. One of them has been contradicted by Ventures Africa which puts the number of women who die of breast cancer at 40. See link.</p> |
| <p>A professor of pharmacognosy in Nigeria has claimed that he found three compounds from natural products that can be used against the new coronavirus and Severe and Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and are being developed into a drug. He also confirmed the (false) statement made by US president Donald Trump that the FDA had approved chloroquine for the treatment of COVID-19. Excerpt from the interview:</p> | <p>The claim was made in an interview by Professor Maurice Iwu, a former Independent Electoral Commission chairman and a professor of pharmacognosy, and published in Vanguard newspaper on March 29, 2020, page 10.</p> | <p>Possibly to reveal a treatment for COVID-19 and reassure Nigerians that the drug for the novel coronavirus are being developed.</p> | <p>The claim may raise false hope and lead infected persons to self-medicate with chloroquine, without seeking medical attention.</p> |

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| <p>“And also, you heard American president Donald Trump talk about how Food and Drug Administration (FDA) was able to fast track the use of Chloroquine for the treatment of Coronavirus. So, we do have a compound that is active against Coronavirus. And the idea is being developed as we speak.”</p>  | | | |
| <p>It is claimed that “wonderful kola” (<i>Bucchozia coricea</i>) also known as <i>Uworo</i> in Yoruba, <i>Owiin</i> in Edo, <i>Uke</i> in Igbo) can be used to treat hypertension. It is also said to prevent premature ageing, stops migraine and treats impotency and typhoid.</p> | <p>The claim was made by columnist Doris Obinna in the Sun newspaper of February 6, 2020, page 21.</p> | <p>Possibly to provide information on the health benefits of natural plants.</p> | <p>It might lead people to rely solely on “wonderful kola” to cure the listed health conditions, rather than getting appropriate medical care.</p> |

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