



Consell
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**Content on YouTube and social networks promoting
claims to cure COVID-19**

Conclusion

We have identified a number of videos on YouTube promoting products with claims of curing COVID-19 that have not been approved by the Catalan, Spanish or international health authorities, nor have the consensus of the scientific community.

We analysed 16 videos as a sample of this type of content, which is in no way an exhaustive study of the treatment claims found on the platform that run counter to recommendations from the health authorities.

It is important to note that we also identified various strategies to prevent this content being shared. For instance, YouTube has taken down some videos (no longer included in our analysis), Twitter is displaying a warning from the Spanish Ministry of Health, and Facebook has a message on official prevention recommendations.

The videos analysed promote a range of products as cures for COVID-19. It is claimed that Miracle Mineral Solution (MMS), or sodium chlorite, has an antiviral effect on COVID-19, in addition to healing other conditions.

Many videos include interviews with people posing as medical experts or researchers who "explain" how the supposed antiviral properties work and argue that health authorities have not acknowledged it due to pressure from the pharmaceutical industry, as it would be a much cheaper treatment. Some use props to convey a scientific image: scientific instruments in the background, use of medical or biomedical concepts, or wearing a white coat.

In addition to such claims, some videos cast doubt on the origin of coronavirus (citing conspiracy theories about military units voluntarily or involuntarily spreading it) and question the need for protective measures such as social distancing.

Last but not least, some videos give contact details on where to buy the recommended products.

The significance of this phenomenon is evident from the view statistics: the 16 videos have garnered over 340,000 views in a very short space of time (15 were released in March), showing how rapidly this type of content spreads. Furthermore, it is also

shared on social networks such as Twitter and Facebook, where it is difficult to quantify views.

Filter bubbles play a major role here: algorithms are used to recommend users to watch other similar videos. Similarly, fragments and repeats of the same content (such as an interview with a self-professed scientist) on various channels is also an indication of how far-reaching these echo chambers are, created by a very specific segment of the population.

In conclusion, widely viewed videos on YouTube claiming to offer cures for COVID-19 using products that are not approved by the health authorities are contributing to misinforming the public about treatment of the pandemic. Furthermore, the internet - more specifically YouTube in this case, is an ecosystem that enables rapid dissemination of content, leading to digital ghettos or bubbles with common behavioural patterns.

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