

YouTube breeding ground for anti-vaccination views

December 5 2007

As cold and flu season hits this year amid growing debate over the necessity of vaccinations, University of Toronto researchers have uncovered widespread misinformation in related videos on YouTube.

In the first-ever study of its kind, U of T researchers Dr. Kumanan Wilson and Dr. Jennifer Keelan analyzed 153 videos about vaccination and immunization on YouTube, a popular online video-sharing site. Researchers found that more than half of the videos portrayed childhood, HPV, flu and other vaccinations negatively or ambiguously.

Of those videos, a staggering 45 per cent contained messages that contradict the 2006 Canadian Immunization Guide, which provides national guidelines for immunization practices. The Canadian recommendations are similar to guidelines from the American Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

“YouTube is increasingly a resource people consult for health information, including vaccination,” says first author Keelan, an assistant professor in U of T’s Department of Public Health Sciences. “Our study shows that a significant amount of immunization content on YouTube contradicts the best scientific evidence at large. From a public health perspective, this is very concerning.”

The research team also found that videos skeptical of vaccinations – many of them highly provocative and powerful – received more views and better ratings by YouTube users than those videos that portray

immunizations in a positive light.

“Health care professionals need to be aware that individuals critical of immunization are using YouTube to communicate their viewpoints and that patients may be obtaining information from these videos” says Wilson, senior author and an associate professor with U of T’s Department of Medicine. “YouTube users also need to be aware of this, so they can filter information from the site accordingly.”

“The findings also indicate that public health officials should consider how to effectively communicate their viewpoints through Internet video portals,” Wilson says.

Source: University of Toronto

Citation: YouTube breeding ground for anti-vaccination views (2007, December 5) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2007-12-youtube-ground-anti-vaccination-views.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.