Truth-Seeking & Telling in the Pandemic
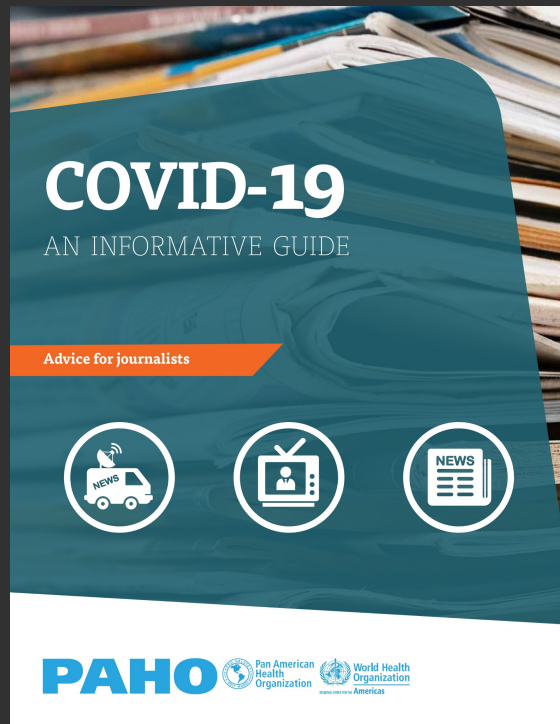
Wesley Gibbings, Media Institute of the Caribbean

The First Word (From WHO/ PAHO Guide)

COVID-19
AN INFORMATIVE GUIDE

Advice for journalists

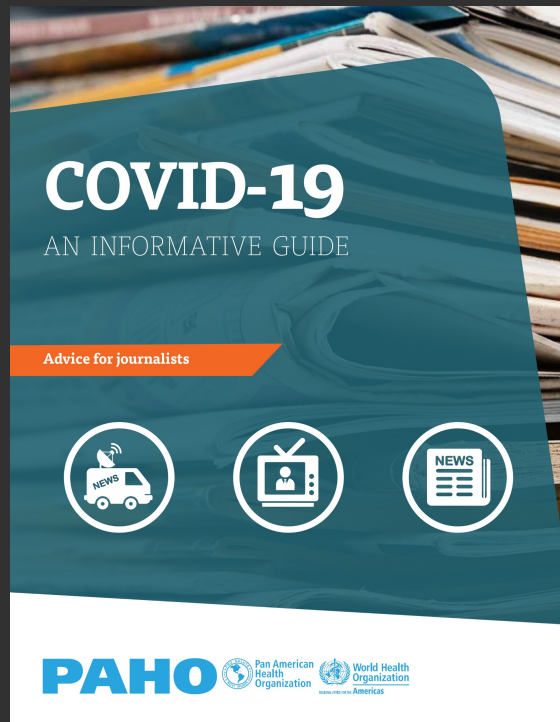|	
Be	Be ethical and responsible.
Be	Be socially responsible.
Refrain	Refrain from being sensationalist or alarmist.
Communicate	Communicate facts and truthful information on COVID-19 pandemic and the response.
Use	Use reliable, scientific, truthful and verified sources.

The First Source (cont'd)

Quote	Quote scientists, researchers, public health professionals, academics and specialists in otherdisciplines who can clarify public concerns about the situation.
Report	Truthfully report on measures that help contain and/or mitigate the spread of the disease.
Report	Report on the jobs performed by health workers and their situation, given their critical role in responding to the epidemic.
Report	Report on patients recovering, communities taking measures to tackle the disease, or countries that have exemplary approaches.
Provide	Provide reporting that contributes to solutions

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PAHO Pan American Health Organization · World Health Organization Americas

The Mandate

STORIES

CLARIFY TERMS

SOCIAL MEDIA

RELIABLE
INFORMATION FROM
EXPERT SOURCES

MANAGING THE
CONSPIRACY
THEORIES

The Mandate (Cont'd)

MANAGING DISINFORMATION

AVOIDING FALSE BALANCE

RECOGNISING AND MANAGING FEAR AND UNCERTAINTY

HUMILITY – THERE ARE THINGS WE DON'T KNOW

More Mandates

Contextualising Stories

Diversifying Testimonies

Acknowledging the Frontline

Managing and Presenting Data/Statistics – Data Visualisations

The Multi-Dimensional Nature of the Stories

Diagnosing the Disinfodemic

1. Origins and spread of the coronavirus/COVID-19 disease

2. False and misleading statistics

3. Economic impacts

4. Discrediting of journalists and credible news outlets

5. Medical science: symptoms, diagnosis and treatment

Diagnosing the Disinfodemic

6. Impacts on society and the environment

7. Politicisation

8. Content driven by fraudulent financial gain

9. Celebrity-focused disinformation

Just to name a few (Poynter)

Fact-Checked by: Science Feedback - 2020/10/20 | United States

FALSE: The U.S. CDC said that the virus which causes COVID-19 was never airborne; masks are therefore worthless

Fact-Checked by: La Silla Vacía - 2020/10/23 | Colombia

MISLEADING: The WHO says that governments should put aside quarantines

And more

Fact-Checked by: La Silla Vacía - 2020/10/24 | Colombia

FALSE: A swab test pierced a woman's brain

Fact-Checked by: Myth Detector - 2020/10/27 | Georgia, United States

FALSE: The risk of wearing a mask outweighs its benefits, namely, wearing a mask causes bacterial pneumonia, and CDC head Anthony Fauci has known about this danger since 2008.

Okay, two more

Fact-Checked by: Myth Detector - 2020/10/28 | Georgia

FALSE: The World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a pandemic upon Bill Gates' instructions. He claims that after the U.S. President halted funding to the WHO, Bill Gates transferred USD 50 million to it that was followed by declaring COVID-19 a pandemic the very next day.

Fact-Checked by: Estadão Verifica - 2020/10/29 | Brazil

FALSE: COVID-19 vaccine causes cancer, genetic modifications in humans and causes 'homosexuality'

Recognise any of these?

COVID-19 virus can't be transmitted in areas with hot and humid climates

The new coronavirus can be transmitted through goods manufactured in China or any country reporting COVID-19 cases.

The new coronavirus can be transmitted through mosquito bites.

These?

Hand dryers help kill the new coronavirus

Thermal scanners help detect people infected with the new coronavirus

Spraying alcohol or chlorine all over your body will kill the new coronavirus

Last set

Regularly rinsing your nose with saline can help prevent infection with the new coronavirus

The new coronavirus only affects older people

Antibiotics can help prevent and treat the new coronavirus

The Language of COVID-19

Some Useful Glossaries:

1. PAHO - https://www.paho.org/en/node/70518

2. IJNET - https://ijnet.org/en/resource/key-terms-every-journalist-should-know-when-covering-covid-19

3. WIRED - https://www.wired.com/story/coronavirus-glossary/

4. Yale Medicine - https://www.yalemedicine.org/stories/covid-19-glossary/

The Global Sources

1. World Health Organisation - COVID-19 Resource Hub & WHO Daily Situation Report

2. The Lancet - Coronavirus Resource Centre - https://www.thelancet.com/coronavirus

3. Pan American Health Organization (PAHO)

4. The CARPHA Dashboards

5. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

The National Sources

1. Ministry of Health

2. Other Government Ministries – Finance, Trade, Labour, Tourism, Energy/Extractive Industries, Education, Social Welfare, Culture

3. Organisations – Psychiatry/Psychology, Bankers, Relief Agencies, Labour Unions, Business Chambers, Faith-Based Organisations, Farmers, Fisherfolk

4. Parliament

5. Local Government