Reddit bans anti-vaccine community after protests over COVID misinformation

September 2 2021, by Brett Molina

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Reddit has banned a community linked to misinformation about the COVID vaccine following a series of protests from other subreddits.

In a post Wednesday, Reddit said it has permanently banned the subreddit NoNewNormal, which described itself as providing "skeptical discussion" related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Reddit said the community engaged in multiple instances of "brigading," where users of a subreddit attempt to interfere with another community. According to Reddit, users of NoNewNormal targeted communities with "more mainstream views on COVID or location-based communities that

have been discussing COVID restrictions."

The platform said 54 other COVID denial subreddits have been placed under quarantine, which means their content won't appear in searches or recommendations, and carry a warning requiring users to approve viewing the subreddit.

The decision followed several popular communities going dark to protest Reddit's inaction against the spread of COVID-19 misinformation.

"Weaponized misinformation is a key problem shaping our Future," read a message Tuesday on the subreddit Futurology, which has more than 15 million members. "Reddit won't enforce their policies against misinformation, brigading, and spamming."

Tech platforms continue to wrestle with how best to curb the spread of misinformation related to COVID and the vaccine.

On Wednesday, Amazon said it was blocking some autocomplete results related to searches for ivermectin, an anti-parasite treatment for humans and animals misused by some people to treat COVID-19. When users type "iv" in Amazon's search bar, it would automatically pull up several results for ivermectin.

Twitter has increased crackdowns on COVID misinformation, including applying labels to tweet they deem "misleading." In August, Twitter suspended the account for U.S. Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene (R-Ga.) for a second time in two months due to a COVID-19 vaccine tweet they labeled "misleading."

Meanwhile, lawmakers introduced a bill in July to hold companies such as Facebook and Twitter accountable for misinformation spread about a public health emergency like the COVID pandemic.

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