

Internet giants fight spread of coronavirus untruths

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Tech platforms are stepping up efforts to stop the spread of misinformation about the new coronavirus

As the new coronavirus spreads globally, the online battle to keep misinformation about the disease is also stepping up.

Google, Facebook and other platforms are struggling to keep ahead of scammers, trolls, and others with ill intent who routinely use major tragedies or disasters as opportunities to swindle or manipulate people.

"The [public concern](#) about coronavirus is being used as a vehicle to get people to transmit misinformation and disinformation," said University of Washington biology professor Carl Bergstrom.

Internet companies took part in a meeting with the World Health Organization last week at Facebook offices in Silicon Valley to discuss tactics such as promoting reliable information and fact-checking dubious claims about the coronavirus referred to as COVID-19.

"(We must) combat the spread of rumors and misinformation," WHO Director General Tedros

Adhanom Ghebreyesus told AFP recently.

"To that end, we have worked with Google to make sure people searching for information about coronavirus see WHO information at the top of their search results."

Google search ranks authoritative sources higher when people are seeking information on health and labels results or news stories that have been fact-checked.

Ghebreyesus said that social media platforms including Twitter, Facebook, Tencent and TikTok have also taken steps to limit spread of misinformation about coronavirus.

Facebook said in a recent online post that it is focusing on claims which, if relied on, could increase the likelihood of someone getting sick or not getting proper treatment.

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