

MEDIA#3 BULLETIN

LEBANON - June 2022

ROOTED IN TRUST 2.0

Maharat has prepared this media bulletin in cooperation with Internews as part of the Rooted in Trust 2.0 project.

Maharat's team of social media monitors continues to collect rumors linked to COVID-19 on various Lebanese platforms. These rumor trends are then analyzed and fact-checked by the Maharat News team.



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What are the people saying?

RUMOR #1

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In only 3 minutes, a PCR test can provide a patient with his/her Covid results



The News posted on the Website

The Voice of All Lebanon website published news in which it indicated that a new test for Covid-19 was discovered, which in less than 3 minutes can reveal the patient's results. In fact, this news led to a wave of questions about the validity of this information.

What are the effects and risks of this rumor?


Without additional scientific verification from health experts and international organizations, believing this rumor may lead to **major confusion** among patients who might do the test without ensuring their results are accurate.

In addition, the people having this test might be at **physical risk** if they resort to taking unnecessary or inaccurate medical solutions, without medical consultations.

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THE FACTS

- The Food and Drug Administration issued a new statement, calling for the emergency use of the first COVID-19 diagnostic test that detects chemical compounds in breath samples associated with SARS-CoV-2 infection.
 - To verify the efficiency and accuracy of this COVID-19 diagnostic test, a study of the performance of the InspectIR Covid-19 Breathelizer was conducted on 2,409 individuals, including those with or without symptoms. The test was shown to have a sensitization ability of 91.2% (the percentage of positive samples correctly identified by the test) and a specificity of 99.3% (the percentage of negative samples correctly identified by the test). A similar sensitivity test was also conducted in another clinical study focused on the Omicron variant.
 - "The test is conducted by a qualified and trained expert under the supervision of a healthcare provider who is licensed or authorized by the state of law to prescribe tests and can provide results in less than three minutes," the statement added.
 - Therefore, what the article provided regarding the COVID-19 diagnostic test is **only partially** correct, as it is possible to obtain a result similar to the result of the PCR through a device that captures the basic compounds of Covid-19 through breathing. To ensure the accuracy of Covid information, it is always recommended to visit the official health websites such as the Food and Drug Organization or the World Health Organization, responsible for providing the latest health developments related to Covid-19.
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TIPS FOR JOURNALISTS



- Do not consider opinion-based data as primary sources for health reporting and coverage without referring to approved studies and scientific facts.
- Do not share any online study and/or discovery on Covid-19 topics without referring to and fact-checking the accuracy of the information from reliable sources.
- Rely on medical studies conducted by international health organizations and experts in the field regarding any updates on Covid-19 tests.
- Monitor on a day-by-day basis the latest updates, statistics, and events happening within the health sector, particularly issues related to Covid-19.

MEDIA PRINCIPLES



- Journalists should always build communication channels with health care actors and professionals to verify and acknowledge the latest updates issuing the tests and symptoms of the Covid virus.
- In addition, journalists should also focus on the newest techniques adopted within the health sector in detecting and/or treating Covid-19

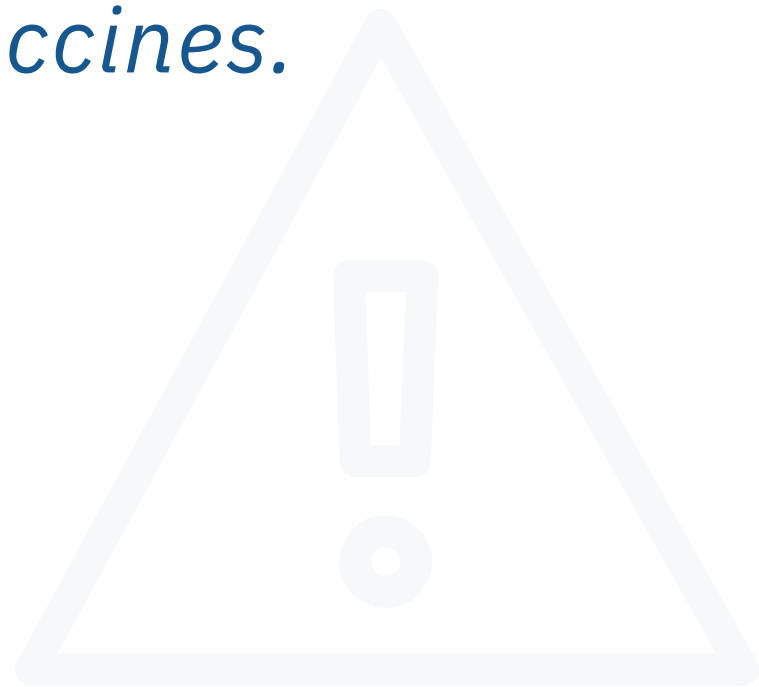


What are the people saying?

RUMOR #2

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A curing cancer vaccine will be produced from the Covid-19 vaccines.



The claim shared on Twitter

The Voice of Lebanon website published on its Twitter account an article indicating that a promising cancer vaccine will be produced, inspired by the Covid-19 vaccine, which raised many questions about the validity of this information.

What are the effects and risks of this rumor?

Believing the claim that cancer vaccines are being produced from Covid-19 vaccines without scientific proof and validation **might give false hope to patients having cancer** and lead them to **take any vaccine** promoted to be the cure for cancer. There is no official data confirming the full effectiveness of cancer vaccines yet based on official international organizations regarding new data and medical discoveries on cancer vaccines, their compositions, and effectiveness.

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THE FACTS

- Researchers at Duke Cancer Institute have examined the potential of a cancer vaccine based on messenger mRNA, the technology used in COVID-19 vaccines, against a type of breast cancer that overexpresses a protein called HER2. And the HER2 protein, which is associated with aggressive tumor growth, increases its activity in 20% to 30% of breast cancers, hence treatments target this protein, according to Lierle George Barth Gellar, Professor of Cancer Research and Professor of Surgery, Immunology and Pathology at Duke University, in an interview with the Fox news network.
- Although the current vaccine is directed against breast cancer, it can be used for other HER2-secreting cancers, including lung cancer, stomach cancer and esophageal cancer.
- Gellar explained that these vaccines "work to stimulate the immune system, specifically killer T cells, which interact with cancer cells and destroy them. They also direct the immune system not to ignore cancer cells, but rather to recognize them as harmful bodies and kill them."
- Currently, researchers, according to the Duke Cancer Institute report, are within phase two of the clinical trial to confirm whether the new vaccine works. And because the immune checkpoint inhibitor pembrolizumab was used alone, it showed limited benefit against breast cancer, but when combined with the vaccine, it showed advanced and promising results.
- Therefore, what was published by Voice of Lebanon **is correct**, as the initial studies on a cancer vaccine inspired by the mRNA technologies in the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines showed positive results. Yet, it is still under clinical trial until its effectiveness in treatment is guaranteed without harmful side risks on undertaking patients.

TIPS FOR JOURNALISTS



- Restrain in using and/or publishing misleading headlines on any health subject to reduce and limit future mental and physical risks among the public.
- Verify and fact-check all updates on cancer vaccines while providing the complete information as confirmed by health care professionals and actors.
- Rely on scientific studies conducted by international health institutions and organizations regarding any data or updates on new vaccination productions, processes, and side effects.
- Analyze the misinformation that can derive from targeted campaigning based on advertising strategies and propaganda.

MEDIA PRINCIPLES



- Journalists should stay up to date on any health subject related to Covid-19. In fact, they should acquire daily knowledge and information through their communication channels with health care actors and professionals to verify any data new discoveries correlated to Covid vaccines.
- In addition, Journalists should adopt constant verification and fact-checking strategies through competent international health organizations to limit the spread of misinformation on Covid data-related.



Sources

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