

MEDIA BULLETIN

#6 LEBANON - July 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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Those who were immunized against smallpox, particularly vaccinated people and Elderly people or individuals above 50 years old of age, have some protection against monkeypox



The News posted on the Website

On June 21, 2022, Jusur published an interview with Professor of Bacterial Diseases Jacques Mokhbat issuing the monkeypox virus and the course of the case that was monitored in Lebanon, and which was shared on social media platforms.

Mokhbat said, according to the website, "Although the Pox virus has disappeared worldwide since late 1970s, after the vaccination of most of the humanity, yet those who have previously received the vaccine against it, particularly over the age of fifty, are protected from the risk of catching the monkeypox virus."

What are the effects and risks of this rumor?

Without scientific verification, believing this rumor may lead to **negligence among citizens**, who might disregard the urgency in taking the necessary precautions towards the monkeypox virus. In addition, **the people might be at a physical risk** if they didn't resort to taking and applying the required measurements when diagnosed with monkeypox, due to their underestimation of the situation.



THE FACTS

- The World Health Organization shared some answers for frequently asked questions regarding monkeypox infection. In fact, a vaccine to prevent monkeypox has recently been approved upon, and some countries are recommending that people at risk should be vaccinated.
- As for pox vaccines, they may also be useful against monkeypox infection, according to WHO, yet very limited and minimal data verify the effectiveness of the pox/monkeypox vaccine upon its recipients.
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) stated that because the virus causing monkeypox is closely related to the virus that causes the normal pox, the pox vaccine can protect people from monkeypox: Previous data from Africa suggests that the pox vaccine is at least 85% effective in preventing monkeypox.
- The centers added that monkeypox and pox vaccines are effective in protecting people from monkeypox when given before exposure to monkeypox, and experts also believe that vaccination after exposure to the monkeypox may help in preventing the disease or make its symptoms less severe.
- In addition, the FDA-approved on two vaccines that are available to prevent monkeypox infection - JYNNEOS (also known as Imvamune or Imvanex) and ACAM2000 in the United States. Yet, no information was reported on the differences in the rates of protection against monkeypox according to the age group among those previously vaccinated with the pox vaccine.
- Therefore, what Professor Jacques Mokhbat said is partly true: to further elaborate, it is correct that those vaccinated against the pox earlier would be protected against monkeypox, yet there is no correlation between protection against monkeypox and the age group to which a person belongs to.
- Nevertheless, to ensure that your information is verified and accurate, always visit the official health websites directly concerned with following up on updates on global diseases and epidemics, providing the necessary medical instructions, such as the website of the World Health Organization.

TIPS FOR JOURNALISTS



- Do not share any statement addressed by news media outlets on health topics without referring and fact-checking the accuracy of the information from international organizations.
- Rely on the latest and trusted scientific and medical studies conducted by global health bodies issuing updates on monkeypox vaccines as your primary sources for data and health reporting
- Focus on providing the accurate information issuing the symptoms and vaccines of global epidemics as the monkeypox on the different social and age groups within communities without using misleading headlines on any health subject that might cause mental and physical risks among vulnerable groups.
- Remain transparent and offer all necessary information about global epidemics and the similarities and differences that can carry while maintaining a risk-averse approach in media health reporting.

MEDIA PRINCIPLES



- Journalists should always provide the latest updates on the productions and provision of vaccines declared and approved upon by the global health organizations issuing global diseases and viruses such as monkeypox.
- In addition, fact-checking is a must in science and health reporting to ensure the spread of accurate information to local communities and vulnerable groups.



What are the people saying?

RUMOR #2



Currently, those who have been vaccinated with two or three doses with being diagnosed once with Covid-19 are not required to take any other booster or vaccine doses.



The claim shared on Facebook

A social media pioneer posted on his Facebook account, explaining that "nowadays, those who have been vaccinated with two or three doses with being diagnosed at least once with Covid-19 are not required to take any other doses," according to his personal point of view.

What are the effects and risks of this rumor?

People who have already been vaccinated, got Covid-19 and believed this rumor without scientific verification **might restrain from taking other necessary immunity boosters** requested from health care experts, which in return might put them at **physical risk** if they got any other Covid-19 variants and had severe symptoms in the future.





THE FACTS

- The shared post, written by one of the social media pioneers, stated that " patients who have been vaccinated with two or three doses with being diagnosed at least once with Covid-19 are not required to take any other doses. As for people who did not receive the vaccine, they must take the three doses and consider their diagnosis with Covid-19 as a dose of itself. Giving the example that a patient who got Covid-19 twice, should take one dose, etc... As for the elderly and people with serious chronic problems should take the fourth dose. In general, the situation is under control and there is no need to be afraid regarding that matter".
- However, both the World Health Organization and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) consider that two doses of Covid-19 vaccines in normal health conditions are sufficient and enough, and in some cases a third dose of the Pfizer-Bio-N-tech vaccine can be taken for ages between 6 months to 4 years old, with a duration difference of 3 to 8 weeks between the first and second dose, and 8 weeks between the second and third doses.
- Taking additional doses depends on specific cases. According to the World Health Organization, if a person is immunosuppressed or have immune deficiencies, they should be given priority to receive an additional dose of the Covid-19 vaccine after one to three months. More specifically, people with weak immune systems don't always develop enough immunity against Covid-19 after one or two doses, therefore, an extra dose can help to protect them, with a booster dose if recommended by a doctor and/or health expert.
- Also, if the person is 60 years of age or older and have been vaccinated with Sinovac or Sinopharm, they should be given a third dose 3 to 6 months later. It has been found that people over the age of 60 develop less protection after two doses of these vaccines than younger people. Therefore, getting a third dose can help them develop a stronger immunity, and should also get a booster dose.
- As for considering that being infected with Covid-19 equals a dose of the vaccine, is completely inaccurate and incorrect, as the World Health Organization considered that even if a patient has contracted Covid-19, he/she should get the vaccine. The protection that a person gains from contracting the virus varies greatly from a person to another. In fact, the immunity people get from vaccination after a natural diagnosis is always very strong. By extension, getting vaccinated even if a patient had Covid-19 means that they are more likely to be protected for longer period of time.
- Therefore, what was published is incorrect, as it is not based on any health references or scientific studies, but on a personal point of view that contradicts the information mentioned with the medical reports received from official health authorities. Nevertheless, to make sure of the number of doses you should get, always rely and visit health care experts as well as the official health websites concerned with monitoring the Covid-19 and all updates on its vaccines such as the World Health Organization and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

TIPS FOR JOURNALISTS



- Verify all updates on Covid-19 vaccines and the required doses that should be taken by each patient by relying on the latest studies published by global health organizations.
- Restrain from fueling stigma around the most vulnerable population groups, particularly on topics issuing Covid-19's vaccination and immunization processes.
- Fact checks all misinformation and rumors issuing health topics that can have direct physical and mental risks on its recipients.
- Avoid using misleading headlines that cover any health subject to reduce and limit the spread of panic and fear among the public.

MEDIA PRINCIPLES



- Journalists should always build communication channels with health care actors and professionals to verify the latest data issuing the Covid-19 vaccines. In addition, journalists should improve their skills in science and health reporting, particularly when covering global epidemics and when providing detailed and scientific information on the immunization and vaccination phases within local communities.



Sources

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