

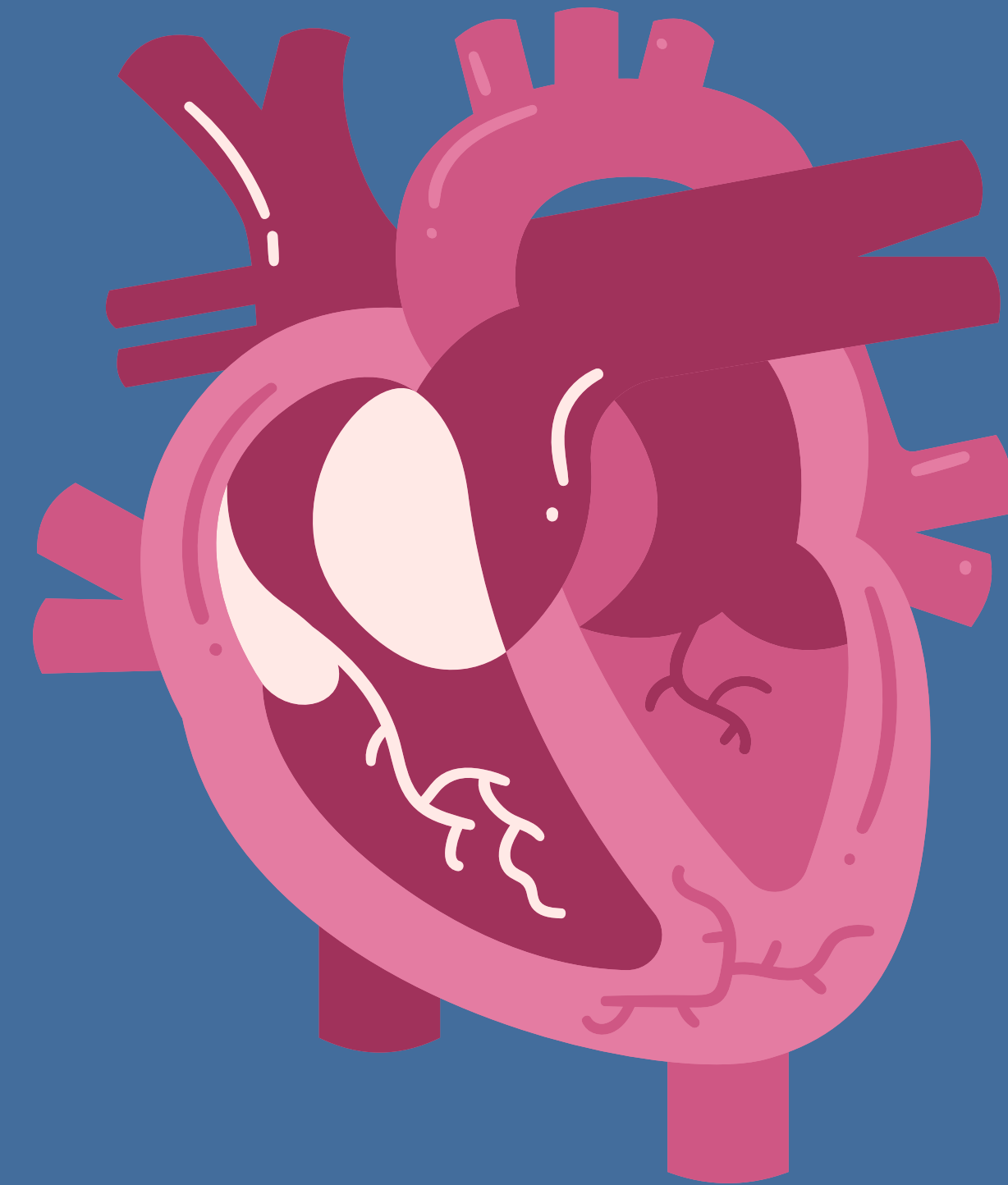
# MEDIA BULLETIN

#8 LEBANON - September 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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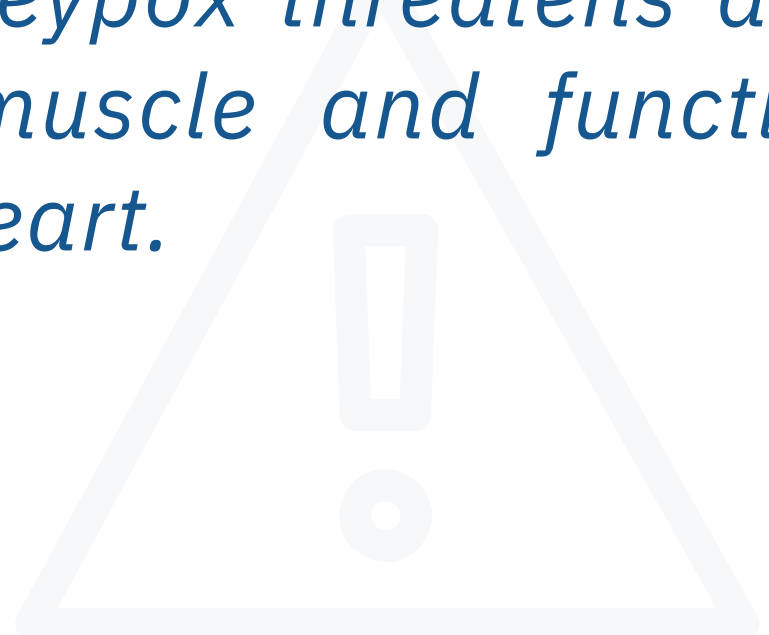
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# What are the people saying?

## RUMOR #1



*New emergent and discovered symptoms of the Monkeypox threatens directly the muscle and function of the heart.*



The claim shared on Twitter

Sawt Al-Mada Radio published, through its Twitter account, a news content in which it indicated the emergence of a new symptom of Monkeypox that threatens the heart, based on the case of a 31-year-old man whom developed myocarditis, just one week after being diagnosed with the symptoms of the virus.

## What are the effects and risks of this rumor?

Without scientific verification, believing this rumor may lead to **major fear and panic among citizens and patients**, who might be diagnosed with the monkeypox. In addition, the public might be at a **physical risk** if they did resort to taking random medications without referring and relying to medical and health care experts.



## THE FACTS

- The American College of Cardiology published a new study in the Journal of the American College of Cardiology, in which it indicated that a 31-year-old man developed myocarditis a week after having symptoms of Monkeypox.
- The study explained that myocarditis was previously associated with pox infection, a virus more aggressive than Monkeypox, yet "through extrapolation, the Monkeypox virus can lead to the enlargement of heart muscle tissue or cause an immune infection that harms the heart."
- In addition, Dr. Julia Grapsa, editor-in-chief of the College Journal, explained that, "Through a case study of a 30-year-old patient, we are developing a deeper understanding of Monkeypox and viral myocarditis and how to diagnose and manage this disease accurately."
- "This case highlights the emergence of myocarditis as a potential complication associated with Monkeypox infection, and we believe that reporting this potential causal relationship could raise awareness of the possibility for developing a complication of myocarditis," said Dr. Grapsa . "The scientific community and health professionals have identified acute myocarditis as a potential complication of Monkeypox, and it may be important to carefully monitor affected patients for other complications that Monkeypox may lead to in the future."
- The doctors supervising this study recommended the need for more research to determine the relationship between Monkeypox and heart injury.



## THE FACTS

- But so far, myocarditis has not been included as a symptom of Monkeypox. In fact, The World Health Organization clearly stated the following recognized symptoms:
  - Fever
  - Severe headache
  - Enlarged lymph nodes (swollen lymph nodes)
  - Back pain
  - Muscle pain (muscular pain)
  - Severe asthenia (lack of energy)
  - Lymphadenopathy
  - Symptoms similar to chickenpox, measles, smallpox
- Therefore, what was published by Sawt al-Mada website is incorrect, as the study relied on a single disease case, which is not sufficient to generalize the correlation between Monkeypox and myocarditis, and the specified doctors emphasized the need for more in-depth studies to confirm the existence of a relationship between Monkeypox and the heart. The World Health Organization did not refer to this symptom in any of its statements or reports.
- By extension, to ensure that your information is correct, always visit the official health websites concerned with monitoring and analyzing epidemics, such as the website of the World Health Organization.



## TIPS FOR JOURNALISTS



- Do not share any health statement or results addressed by websites on health topics without referring and fact-checking the accuracy of the information and data from the concerned local and international health organizations.
- Restrain from sharing studies that are not based on qualitative or quantitative methodologies and does not meet the standards and accuracy of scientific research.
- Double-check all the number of cases shared by any news website related to reported cases on monkeypox and other epidemic to reduce fear and panic among the readers and citizens.
- Remain transparent and offer all necessary and complete information regarding global epidemics, its symptoms and side effects while maintaining a risk-averse approach in media health reporting.
- Restrain in using misleading headlines on any health subject that might cause physical and mental risks among the public as well as vulnerable groups.

## MEDIA PRINCIPLES



- Journalists should always analyze and double-check all information and studies that can be included in any news product regarding health-related topics, while verifying these data through primary accurate sources with international health organization and health care experts.
- In addition, journalists should always provide the latest updates on epidemics like the Monkeypox concerning any short and/or long-term side effects, to ensure the spread of accurate information of this virus and its evolvement to the public.

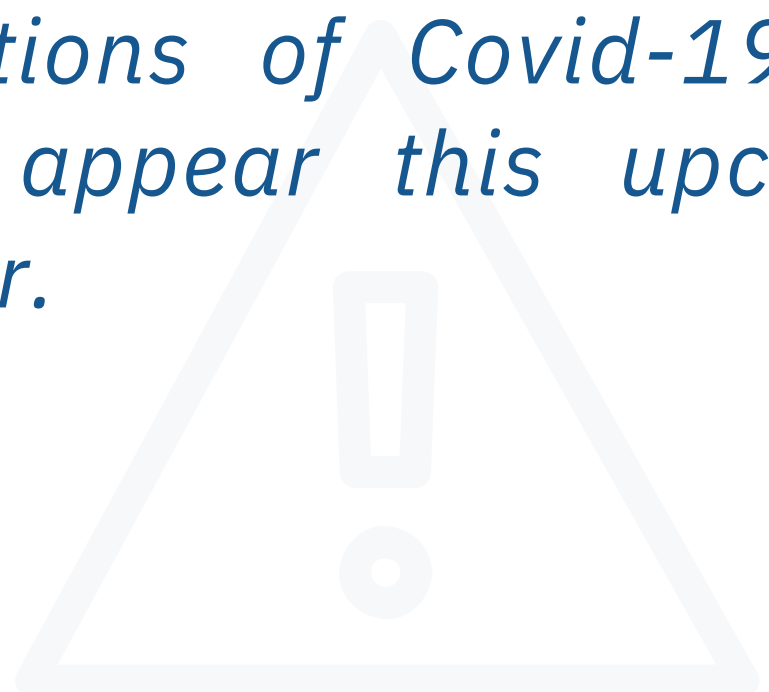


# What are the people saying?

## RUMOR #2



*A European Medicines Agency official is warning from new mutations of Covid-19 that may appear this upcoming winter.*



The claim shared on Facebook

On September 3rd, 2022, LBC TV channel published a news content entitled "European Medicines Agency official warns of new mutations from Covid-19 that may appear next winter."

In the details of the news, the European Union Medicines Agency reported that new mutations from the Covid-19 may appear this winter, but the currently available vaccines are supposed to protect against acute disease or death.

## What are the effects and risks of this rumor?

Without scientific proof, people who have already been vaccinated and believed this rumor might **neglect and restrain from taking other necessary measurements** if the rumor was correct, in terms of vaccines efficiency, and that these new variants might put some **physical risks on its patients**. Yet, People who might not believe this rumor and are not vaccinated, may be at **physical risk** if the rumor was correct in case they got any other Covid-19 variants and/or **disregarded the necessity of following the requested measurements** in preventing and being fully immunized against future strains.



## THE FACTS

- On September 2nd, 2022, the European Medicines Agency organized a press conference dedicated to the latest developments of the Covid-19 in Europe.
- The official in charge of vaccine strategy at the agency, Marco Cavalieri, said that European countries are still suffering from the spread of the "BA.5" sub-mutant, which descended from the Omicron strain.
- He further explained that the "Covid-19 virus is rapidly changing and spreading, so it is difficult to predict which variant we will encounter during the fall and winter," noting that it may be similar to Omicron BA.2 and BA.5 and/or may be completely different.
- With regard to preparations to confront the current and expected variant, Cavalieri says that the currently available vaccines protect against acute illness and death.
- Furthermore, the agency has given approval for modified vaccines designed to counter the old "BA.1" variant from Omicron, in addition to an advanced Pfizer vaccine against the "BA.4" and "BA.5" strains expected to be licensed in September 2022, according to what Cavalieri stated.
- As for groups that have priority in vaccination, Cavalieri indicates that the new modified vaccines against Omicron will be intended for both the elderly, pregnant women, health workers and vulnerable groups.
- The World Health Organization has added a new category to its tracking system called Omicron sub-strains to monitor the change of this variant.
- The main objective of this category is to investigate whether these strains may pose an additional threat to the global public health compared to other circulating viruses.
- Therefore, what was published by the "LBC" website is correct in terms of the content of what was issued by the European Medicines Agency, yet the title of the news is misleading, in terms of focusing only on warning against the emergence of new variants and neglecting the reality of the effectiveness of vaccines, according to the reassurance of the European official.



## TIPS FOR JOURNALISTS



- Restrain in using misleading headlines on any health subject that might cause physical and mental risks among the public as well as vulnerable groups concerning new Covid-19 strains.
- Verify all updates on Covid-19 vaccines and variants by relying on the latest studies published by the global health organizations and global health officials.
- Fact check all information and rumors issuing health topics that can have direct effect on the immunization processes of local communities and any physical and/or mental risks on its recipients.
- Restrain from fueling stigma around the most vulnerable population groups particularly on topics issuing Covid-19's vaccination and immunization processes and existence of new variants.

## MEDIA PRINCIPLES



- Journalist should always rely on official local and international health organization as well as experts within the health sector as when covering and reporting on any updates on pandemics, specifically Covid-19.
- In addition, journalists should improve their skills in science and health journalism particularly when covering global epidemics through basing their work on the principles of fact-checking, critical thinking, and data verification, particularly when addressing such topics to the public sphere.





## Sources

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