

Handout

Title of activity	Ethical Challenges in Information Disorder
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Step 1: MISINFORMATION. DISINFORMATION, MAL-INFORMATION

Example 1 – Misinformation

Title: "Viral Hoax Claims Eating Chocolate Cures Allergies"

Why this is misinformation?

In this example of misinformation, a viral social media post claims that consuming large quantities of chocolate can miraculously cure allergies. The post suggests that a "new study" has found a unique compound in chocolate that counteracts allergic reactions and boosts the immune system.

The misinformation spreads rapidly as people share the post without fact-checking or verifying its source. Some individuals, eager for a simple solution to their allergy problems, start sharing their experiences of eating chocolate and claiming relief from allergies.

However, upon closer inspection, it becomes clear that the original post lacks any credible sources or references to a legitimate study. In reality, no scientific evidence supports the idea that chocolate can cure allergies.

Despite efforts from experts and health authorities to debunk the misinformation, the initial post continues to circulate, leading to a wave of misguided individuals incorporating excessive amounts of chocolate into their diets in the hope of finding relief from allergies. This example highlights how misinformation, when shared widely and not critically evaluated, can contribute to the spread of inaccurate beliefs and potentially harmful behaviors.

Example 2 – Disinformation

Title: "Miracle Cure Unveiled for Common Cold!"

In a widely shared online article, a supposed breakthrough in medical science claims to have discovered a miraculous cure for the common cold. The article cites prestigious-sounding institutions and fabricated quotes from non-existent experts, asserting that the cure is a result of years of groundbreaking research.

The disinformation goes on to describe a "secret ingredient" that, when added to daily meals, guarantees immunity against the common cold. The article suggests that major pharmaceutical companies are conspiring to keep this miracle cure hidden to protect their profits from cold-related medications.

*In reality, the entire story is a fabricated narrative aimed at generating clicks and shares. The fake article preys on people's desire for quick fixes and distrust in established institutions. **This disinformation campaign** not only misleads the public but also undermines trust in legitimate medical research. It exemplifies how false narratives can be created and disseminated to exploit people's vulnerabilities, leading to a distorted understanding of reality.*



Example 3 – Mal-Information

Title: "Scientists Uncover Shocking Side Effects of Common Vaccines"

**Mal-information refers to the dissemination of misleading or false information with the intent to harm or deceive.*

A recent study conducted by a group of researchers claims to have uncovered alarming side effects associated with widely-used vaccines. The study suggests a link between vaccination and an increased risk of certain health conditions. The findings have sparked concerns among parents and healthcare professionals alike.

The study, which involved a small sample size and questionable research methods, implies that vaccines may be responsible for various health issues, including allergies and developmental delays. The researchers make bold statements without providing substantial evidence or considering other factors that could contribute to the observed effects.

As the news of these alleged vaccine side effects spreads, it creates unnecessary panic and distrust in the effectiveness and safety of vaccines. In reality, the study is flawed and does not withstand scientific scrutiny. This example illustrates how mal-information can be used to manipulate public opinion and undermine trust in important public health measures.