



1700 K Street, NW | Suite 740 | Washington, DC 20006

T 202.293.2856

www.agingresearch.org

[@Aging_Research](https://twitter.com/Aging_Research)

August 11, 2021

Jack Dorsey
Co-founder and CEO
Twitter
1355 Market Street, Suite 900
San Francisco, CA 94103

Sundar Pichai
CEO
Google
1600 Amphitheatre Pkwy
Mountain View, CA 94043

Susan Wojcicki
CEO
YouTube
1000 Cherry Avenue
San Bruno, CA 94066

Mark Zuckerberg
CEO
Facebook
1 Hacker Way
Menlo Park, CA 94025

Dear Mr. Dorsey, Mr. Pichai, Ms. Wojcicki, and Mr. Zuckerberg,

The undersigned organizations represent older adults, patients, family caregivers, diverse communities, and healthcare workers. **We are writing you today to urge you to completely remove the accounts of prominent anti-vaxxers and their organizing pages from your platforms and to immediately begin issuing corrective posts to counter the misinformation and disinformation in your platform feeds.**

[Seven in ten U.S. adults](#), equal to 146 million people, report using social media. Of this population, anti-vaccine activists on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and Twitter reach more than 59 million followers, making these digital channels the largest social media platforms used by anti-vaxxers to share false and inaccurate information about vaccines and vaccine safety. Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, people have been exposed to an abundance of health misinformation and disinformation about approved COVID-19 vaccines. While misinformation is false information created and spread regardless of an intent to harm or deceive, *disinformation* is a type of misinformation that is designed to be deliberately deceptive. Both forms cause massive confusion and fear, and lead people to decline COVID-19 vaccines, reject masking, physical distancing, and other scientifically proven health and safety measures.

In a [July 2021 U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory](#), Surgeon General Murthy, the Nation's Doctor, warned the American public about the urgent threat of health misinformation, including:

- As of late May, [67 percent of unvaccinated adults](#) had heard at least one COVID-19 vaccine myth and either believed it to be true or were not sure of its veracity.
- [An analysis of millions of social media posts](#) found that false news stories were 70 percent more likely to be shared than true stories.
- And a [recent study](#) showed that even brief exposure to misinformation made people less likely to want a COVID-19 vaccine.

We acknowledge you have individually taken steps to protect people from harmful content on your platforms. **However, up to this point, your efforts have not moved the needle for those who are reluctant to get the COVID-19 vaccine.** According to the [latest survey data from the Kaiser Family Foundation](#), the number of adults who are reluctant to get the COVID-19 vaccine have remained relatively unchanged since January, with 18 percent saying they either will “only get vaccinated if required” or will “definitely not” get vaccinated.

As you are aware, researchers found just 12 people are responsible for the bulk of the misleading claims and outright lies about COVID-19 vaccines that proliferate on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. A March 2021 report issued by the [Center for Countering Digital Hate \(CCDH\)](#) found that approximately 65 percent of anti-vaccine content on Facebook and Twitter can be attributed to the [“Disinformation Dozen”](#) – 12 individuals who play leading roles in intentionally spreading digital disinformation about coronavirus vaccines, and who have repeatedly violated platform policies. **The most effective and efficient way to stop the dissemination of harmful and deadly information is to remove the accounts—including any backup accounts—of the most highly visible repeat offenders.** The CCDH’s research identifies the top 12 individuals for account removal as:

- | | |
|------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Joseph Mercola | 7. Erin Elizabeth |
| 2. Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. | 8. Sayer Ji |
| 3. Ty and Charlene Bollinger | 9. Kelly Brogan |
| 4. Sherri Tenpenny | 10. Christiane Northrup |
| 5. Rizza Islam | 11. Ben Tapper |
| 6. Rashid Buttar | 12. Kevin Jenkins |

Your platforms must also acknowledge the networks these individuals use to spread their anti-vax messages and remove their organizing pages. Prominent examples include:

- Children’s Health Defense (Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.)
- Informed Consent Action Network (ICAN) (Del Bigtree)
- National Vaccine Information Center (NVIC) (Barbara Loe Fisher, Joseph Mercola)
- Organic Consumers Association (OCA) (Joseph Mercola)
- Millions Against Medical Mandates

A follow-up [CCDH report in April 2021](#) found that nine of the 12 individuals remained on Facebook, 10 of the 12 remained on Twitter, and nine of the 12 remained on Instagram, with no discernible consistency or transparency in how your platforms treat violations. While some accounts and pages have been removed since April, [as of July 16](#) the Disinformation Dozen still have **62 active accounts** that continue to reach millions of people online. **We urge you to take immediate action to remove all of these accounts.**

In addition to removing the worst offenders, we ask you to start immediately issuing corrective posts to counter misinformation and disinformation. The current approach of issuing a warning to users and then requiring them to click on a link to learn more, is insufficient. The [Stronger](#) campaign, managed by the [Public Goods Project](#), promotes “inoculation messaging.” According to inoculation theory, it is possible to “inject” people with effective, pre-emptive messages that better prepare them for the prospect of messaging that might challenge their beliefs. This borrows from the logic of vaccines: the right initial message can help you fight off and resist a future incorrect message. A good inoculation message includes a warning about the danger of being misled by misinformation *and then provides a counterargument to explain the flaws in that misinformation.* This method can be highly effective in debunking rumors, myths, and conspiracy theories because it prepares people for what they might hear.

The Stronger campaign regularly uses inoculation messaging to combat COVID-19 vaccine misinformation.

You are each in unique positions of power and influence over the flow of social communication. You have a social responsibility not only to remove all of these offenders off your platforms completely, but also to do everything possible to debunk and correct these life-threatening disinformation campaigns. We, and the millions of Americans we represent, are depending on you.

Thank you for considering our request. Please contact info@agingresearch.org if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Academy of Medicine of Cleveland & N. Ohio
Alliance for Aging Research
American Muslim Health Professionals
Association of Black Cardiologists
Association of periOperative Registered Nurses (AORN)
Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD)
Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America
Bayard Rustin Liberation Initiative
Caregiver Action Network
Colorectal Cancer Alliance
COVID Survivors for Change
END SEPSIS, the Legacy of Rory Staunton
Global Healthy Living Foundation
Health Care Voices
HealthyWomen
Heart Valve Voice US
HelpAge USA
Illinois Public Health Association
Immunization Action Coalition
International Foundation for Autoimmune & Autoinflammatory Arthritis (AiArthritis)
Kimberly Coffey Foundation

Looms for Lupus
Lupus and Allied Diseases Association, Inc.
Lupus Foundation New England
Meningitis B Action Project
National Association of Social Workers
National Caucus and Center on Black Aging
National Consumers League
National Foundation for Infectious Diseases (NFID)
National Osteoporosis Foundation
NeedyMeds, Inc.
NTM Info & Research
Nurses Who Vaccinate
RetireSafe
Sepsis Alliance
Stop the Spread
The AIDS Institute
The Gerontological Society of America
USP
Vaccinate Your Family
Why We Vax
WomenHeart: The National Coalition for Women with Heart Disease
ZERO - The End of Prostate Cancer