

An extremely important method for discovering and learning new information is through research and fact-checking. Many people's lives have been changed because of the COVID-19 pandemic, and with new information and research also comes new misinformation. A huge contributor to misinformation during the pandemic is social media. With just one click, individuals can share an article, picture, YouTube link, etc. and believe what they see without looking into the truth behind it. That is why it is important to make sure the information we read is true and accurate.

There are many reasons to look beyond certain information and apply them to issues, but on the topic of the pandemic and COVID-19 we must pay close attention to the things we read because it can greatly affect not only our own perspective and beliefs but other peoples as well. Using research when we are unsure of the information given to us or to simply fact-check can give us knowledge about the topic and may improve certain skills and overall well-being. Learning information that is proven to be factual can be obtained by reading research-based articles and books, watching documentaries, participating in experiments, listening to experts and so on. So, doing our own research is an essential component in improving knowledge with facts to then improve learning.

Although the spread of misinformation is a natural human behavior (coinform.edu, 2021) and we rely on information that is directly in front of us, there has been a rise in harmful misinformation surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and

Reddit have implemented fact-checking features for readers to be aware of misinformation from other users on their platforms. Although many believe this to be because of political reasons, the COVID-19 response has created a ton of controversy revolving around the severity of the pandemic and the vaccine that was released to the public to combat the COVID-19 virus.

With 70% of Americans retrieving their news from social media platforms (socialmediatoday.com, 2021), we must strongly consider the influence of online news and information. That is especially true when it comes to the information used to influence our own health and decisions. Doing research and utilizing fact-checks can reveal helpful information to help combat the pandemic and keep individuals and families safe. Continuing to believe false information regarding COVID-19 and the vaccine will only lead to potential harm and create larger healthcare challenges.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding COVID-19 and/or the vaccine, here are some credible resources you can contact to get the most accurate information regarding those concerns:

Sullivan County Public Health

(845) 292-5910 or (845) 513-2268

sullivanny.us/Departments/Publichealth/Coronavirus

Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

1 (800) 232-4636

www.cdc.gov

New York State Department of Health

1 (888) 364-3065

coronavirus.health.ny.gov