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How to combat misinformation in science – 12/15/2023 – Sou Ciência

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The end of the year is always characterized by intense programming, and among the countless activities during this period, one catches our attention: the Symposium on Countering and Preventing Scientific Misinformation in Health and the Environment, held on December 14, which concludes the “FACE” cycle of meetings and seminars across Internet. The title of a series of events that happened personally, but is also available to those who wish to follow it hereIt is a more than clear indication of the moment in which we live. Anyone who works seriously in science knows all too well what the processes of spreading fake news, “pseudoscience,” denial, or even deliberate misinformation have been.

The title “FACE” also shows us that the movement calls for objectivity and resolute action to combat intentional and offensive misinformation, which is a joint effort between researchers and decision-makers, as the spread of fake news directly affects people’s lives and health.

Coordinated by Professor Manuel Barral, President of the Academy of Sciences of Bahia, in partnership with the Conrado Wessel Foundation and the participation of many supporters, including SoU_Ciência, relied on the valuable contribution of many speakers and debaters. Among them are Carlos, Vogt, Evelina Huesel, Karina Costa, Wilson Lopez, Leonardo Afrizer, João Brant, Ethel Maciel, Orlando Silva, Ana Caetano Faria, Marisa von Bülow, Helena Martins, Sergio Luedtke, Soraya Smiley, Renato, Janine Ribeiro, Ana. Valeria Mendonça, Deborah Salles, Herton Escobar, Luisa Masarani, Pedro Arantes, Marco Antonio Zago, Hugo Aguilanio, José Roberto Drugovich, Marilos Moura, Wilson Gomez, Natacha Felizi, Marcia Correa y Castro, Sabine Righetti and Gerson Lima.

In the text published this week (https://theconversation.com/o-enfrentamento-da-desinformacao-intencional-no-brasil-uma-pauta-urgente-219754), the authors and collaborators mentioned point to some paths we can take to combat deliberate misinformation and, ultimately, scientific denial. First of all, they distinguish between “unintentional disinformation and intentional disinformation, the latter of which is our focus, because it is the intentional dissemination of false, inaccurate or misleading information, with the aim of obtaining economic advantages, or for political and ideological gain.” Authors. All of this is enhanced by the different social media that exist today.

It is increasingly clear that for political and/or economic reasons, fake news is spread and often successfully, mainly due to a lack of knowledge about what science is. Social networks have become a breeding ground for those who think they know what it is, who often deliberately deceive and confuse the population. In fact, there is a great deal of confusion in distinguishing between what constitutes scientific evidence and arbitrary, unfounded opinions.

Therefore, it is necessary that the process of continuous training, including media education, is carried out vigorously so that the basis is education that converts people and prevents them from being deceived. At the very least, it is essential that criticism and coverage be consistent with Brazilian reality. However, we now realize that we face some difficulties, such as translating science into more modern forms of communication and language, without compromising scientific rigor. It is also necessary to look for ways to translate and access content, with different communication strategies and different languages ??that take into account different social groups and the socio-economic composition of our society. Finally, it is also important to find ways and mechanisms to exclude and even criminalize intentional disinformation content, in the case of disinformation that puts people’s lives at risk, along with a safety net.

All measures, some of which are listed below, must take into account that it is a complex process, and must be organized and led by well-defined public policies, with broad support for state policy building.

We mention here some operations for this confrontation:

1. Promote the continuous training of scientists in the field of social science communication, starting with training as professionals and researchers;

2. To have multidisciplinary teams, appreciating all aspects of science and knowledge in a broad way.

3. Appreciate and encourage scientists and researchers who socialize science. Understand that communication is part of what you do and your job.

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4. Empowering institutions, scientists, and researchers as qualified agents to resolve doubts. Organizations must have clear communication policies with the community.

5. Rehabilitating and expanding the scope of scientific and cognitive education in schools and at various levels of education, and making science a common practice, its participation, its co-creation, and the work of scientific citizens.

6. The existence of institutional mechanisms to detect and curb the spread of false scientific information, through academic integrity observatories, among other forms.

7. The existence of clear public policies to encourage researchers to train and conduct good scientific communication.

8. The existence of legal and regulatory frameworks that guarantee freedom of opinion, but while controlling intentional misinformation.

9. Guarantee freedom of expression, and ensure that misleading and harmful information is not used by public figures.

10. Opening a broad front for national action for science and public policies, in order to promote science education, support researchers, ensure social development and build a more democratic society.

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