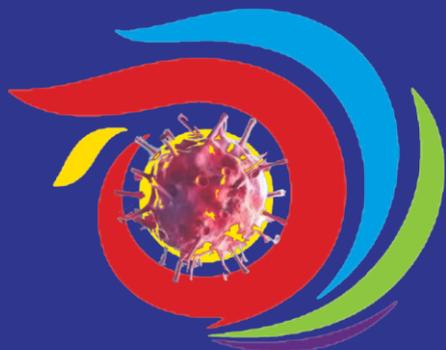


COVID-19 pandemic: health promotion responses

INTERACTIVE WEBINAR



22 June 2020, from 18.00 to 19.00 CEST

Speaker: Pr. Stephan Van den Broucke



Global Health & Education webinar series

Organised by UNESCO Chair and WHO Collaborating Center
Global Health & Education



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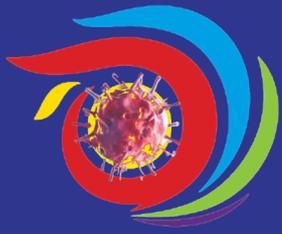
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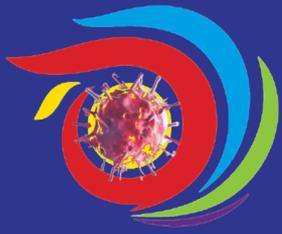
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Health Promotion Responses to the COVID-19 Pandemic

Stephan Van den Broucke
UC Louvain

Global Health & Education webinar series
UNESCO Chair and WHO Collaborating Centre Global Health & Education
22 June 2020

What can health promotion contribute in terms of management of the pandemic?



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QUESTION

What are your key words to describe the contribution of health promotion in managing the pandemic?



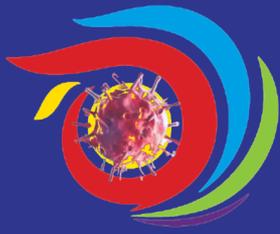
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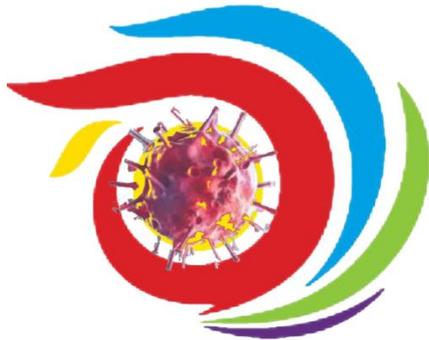


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Why health promotion matters to address the COVID-19 challenge



- COVID-19 has a huge health and societal impact
 - Measures to prevent the virus from spreading and to reinforce treatment capacities are unprecedented
 - Lockdown has disruptive societal consequences
- Health promotion is more important than ever
 - Many protective measures involve *behaviour change* by citizens & health workers
 - Perception that the existing health system is failing to protect citizens against the spread of the virus creates a need for people to *regain control* of their health
 - to protect oneself against the disease
 - to deal with its disruptive consequences
 - Health promotion's contribution to tackle the pandemic can focus at the *downstream*, *midstream* and *upstream* level



Improving Preventive Behaviour Change Measures

- Health authorities have tried to enhance protective behaviour
 - through providing information, issuing health warnings, and imposing legal restrictions
 - low adherence is condemned as “irresponsible” and “selfish”
- Health behaviour models show that people will only act on health warnings if they
 - believe that they are personally **susceptible**
 - perceive the consequences as **severe**;
 - perceive the preventive action as **effective** to reduce the threat
 - believe they are **capable** to perform the preventive action
- Wide coverage of the pandemic by the media creates anxiety
 - too much anxiety can elicit **cognitive avoidance strategies** that minimize the perceived threat
 - social identity needs in interaction with contextual factors can increase and mitigate the actual rejection of evidence (**knowledge resistance**)



Maintaining preventive behaviour

- Behaviour change \neq behaviour ***maintenance***
 - Protective behaviour will have to be maintained as there is chance of infection
 - Relying on health warnings, fear appeals and legal restrictions will become increasingly ineffective to maintain preventive behaviour
- Encouraging sustainable behaviour change requires
 - the establishing of ***social norms***
 - modification of the ***context*** to facilitate and encourage (« nudge ») protective behaviour



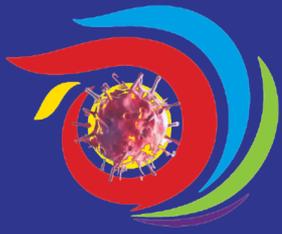
- encouraging ***habit formation***
 - takes shape when the newly learnt behaviour persists
 - takes place automatically, without the need for conscious reflection
 - robust against change



Empowering Organizations and Communities

- Efforts to implement protective measures will be more successful if the advice from experts is combined with **local community knowledge**
 - community partners can help to improve the understanding of disease control protocols
 - moderate changes can be made that better reflect the community's sensitivities
- Community engagement can **strengthen the capacity** to deal with the disruptive effects of the pandemic
 - despite the insecurity and stress due to the switch to different modes of operating, many communities show high levels of solidarity and mutual support
 - community resilience and trust provide a strong basis to help organizations and communities cope with the unfamiliar situation, re-organize and regain control
- **Strengthening community action** is a key competence of health promotion
 - builds on the existing strengths and capacities within a community
 - expertise creating healthy settings can be a source of inspiration and support to help schools, universities and workplaces deal with the longer-term disruptive effects

Fake news, understanding complex issues, health knowledge: how to develop the capacity of each individual to take charge of their own health?



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QUESTION

Do you think the people have the necessary skills to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic?



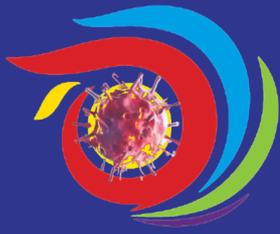
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The importance of health literacy

- To (re)gain control of their lives in the pandemic, people must
 - know what individual preventive measures to take
 - know how to deal with the consequences
- With respect to COVID-19, there is (too) much information
 - not all information is useful, some information is biased or wrong
 - too much information can create confusion
- The challenge is **not** to provide **more** information, but to help people find the way to **accurate and reliable** health information
 - provide information in an understandable, transparent and consistent way recognizing that people with low health literacy may need more explanation and different communication formats
 - explain the situation transparently and clarify the objectives repeatedly
 - communicate new evidence and information without being afraid to correct earlier messages and statements if necessary; and
 - avoid blaming, but instead strengthen the well-informed responsibility of the individual while showing solidarity with vulnerable groups

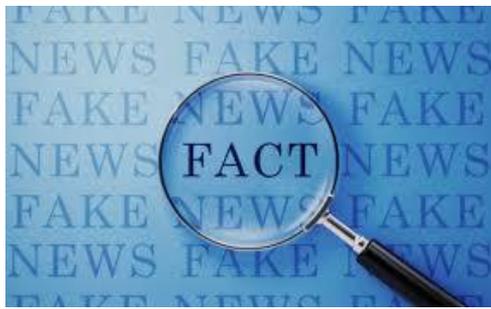


Taking up information is an active cognitive process

- People actively select information sources and information from within these sources
 - selection is influenced by context, emotions and selective attention
 - subject to selection and confirmation bias
- Cognitive schemes are activated to understand and appraise information about the virus and to judge the importance of preventive measures

This can also cause bias

- **negative** information bias
(i.e. the tendency to attach more importance to negative than to positive information, resulting in « catastrophic thinking »)
- **positive** information bias
(i.e. the tendency to consider oneself as less at risk for negative consequence, causing « unrealistic optimism »)
- **familiarity** or recency bias

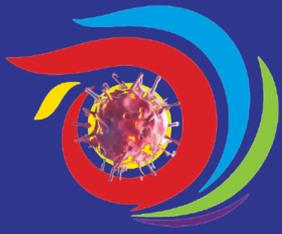


Countering fake news

- Persistent '*myths*' about COVID-19
 - belief that the virus was made in a laboratory or otherwise engineered
 - belief that cold weather or hand dryers kill the virus
 - belief that young people cannot get infected
 - belief that antibiotics or vaccines against pneumonia protect against the infection
- False beliefs are reinforced by the false consensus that is created when information is shared on social media
 - leading to the '*echo chamber*' or '*illusion of truth*' effect
- Can be countered by encouraging people to
 - *cross check* the accuracy and credibility of information
 - check the *source* of the information
 - where does it come from, who is behind the information, what is the intention, why was it shared, when was it published ...
 - *verify* the information by consulting a second source
 - think twice before *sharing* information that has not been fact-checked

There will probably be several waves of COVID-19 outbreaks or other pandemics.

What are the health promotion recommendations for a sustainable response to the pandemic and for the future?



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QUESTION

Will health promotion be widely implemented in managing future pandemics?



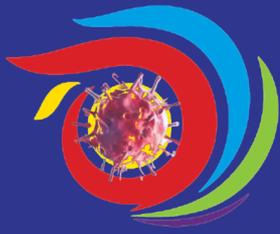
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**COVID-19
RESPONSE**

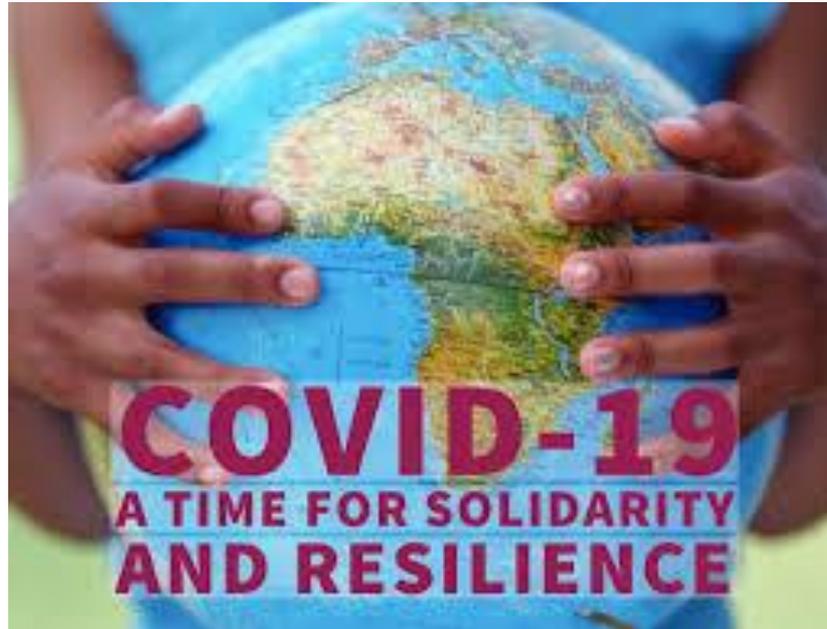
A sustainable reply to the COVID-19 pandemic

- Health promotion can contribute to containing COVID-19 and help people and communities to regain control
 - encourage and facilitate people to adopt and maintain protective behavior
 - strengthen people's competences to find the way to accurate and reliable health information
 - strengthen communities to take action, building on the existing strengths and capacities within the community
 - draw on the expertise with the settings approach to help schools, universities and workplaces deal with the longer-term disruptive effects of COVID-19



Learning from the crisis

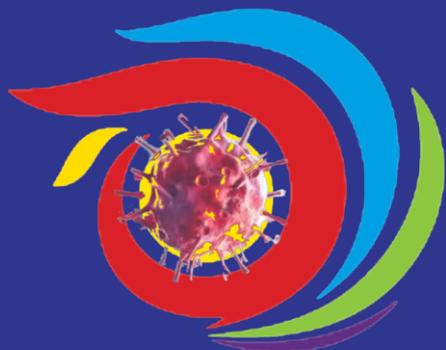
- Recognize the ***importance of infectious diseases***
 - Health promotion has traditionally focused on non-communicable diseases and promoting positive health, but neglected to apply health promotion principles and methods to address infectious diseases
 - Requires a stronger focus on intervention research and a better understanding in the processes involved in implementation, rather than on outcomes and causality
- Recognize that human ***health is not an isolated issue***
 - Embrace the concept of “One Health”, which recognizes the interconnection between people, animals, plants and their shared environment
- Prepare to ***respond swiftly*** and effectively to epidemics
 - Learn about the ways in which people make decisions, organizations operate and communities relate in reaction to epidemics and other crises
 - Seek out how social cohesion and trust in public institutions can be strengthened and mobilized to make communities and populations more resilient against crisis
- Accept that ***not all events can be predicted*** and controlled, and that uncertainty is part of life



COVID-19
A TIME FOR SOLIDARITY
AND RESILIENCE

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