

Conceptions, conspiracies, and knowledge: Our role in bridging the gap



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In our ever-shrinking world, we all too often witness rumors and misconceptions being disseminated irresponsibly by the media. Nowadays anyone can start a blog, share a thought, or create a web article, delivering information that will be rapidly distributed worldwide. In this way conceptions have arisen that vaccination can cause autism, that fluoride will reduce the IQ of our children, and that amalgam will endanger us. It is clear that an evidence base is unnecessary to begin a conception, and it will even be more attractive if the conception is related to an imaginary conspiracy.

In many cases, conceptions are irresponsibly reported in the various types of media, and may become fixed in the public knowledge as facts. Dissemination of such conceptions is much easier to create than to undo, making the conceptions hard to refute. Convincing the public that vaccines are not related to autism and have actually saved the lives of many millions over time is no easy task now the rumors

have been spread. Explaining that fluorides will not reduce IQ but will dramatically improve caries status among the overall population can be very frustrating.

It is our role as the medical and dental community to fight those unsupported rumors and to make sure that the public is aware of the current knowledge as reflected by the available evidence-based literature. It is our responsibility that our patients will be able to differ right from wrong, conceptions from solid evidence, and that they will not be drawn into believing some of the populist misconceptions. It is not an easy fight since the creators of those misconceptions do not usually have to prove anything, but just spread a rumor; it is then our responsibility to prove it wrong. It is one of our roles as medical personnel to dispute misconceptions and to improve our population's knowledge and understanding of health.

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