

who.int



Viral Narratives: Leveraging the power of social media for public health awareness



School of Population and Global Health

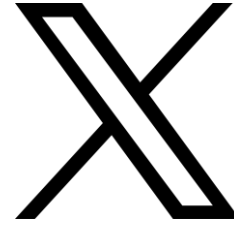
Department of Global and
Public Health

WHO's Social Media Following

As of 02.2024,
WHO have **74.3 million**
subscribers/followers
across social media
channels.

Among UN agencies – WHO ranks top –
in followers.

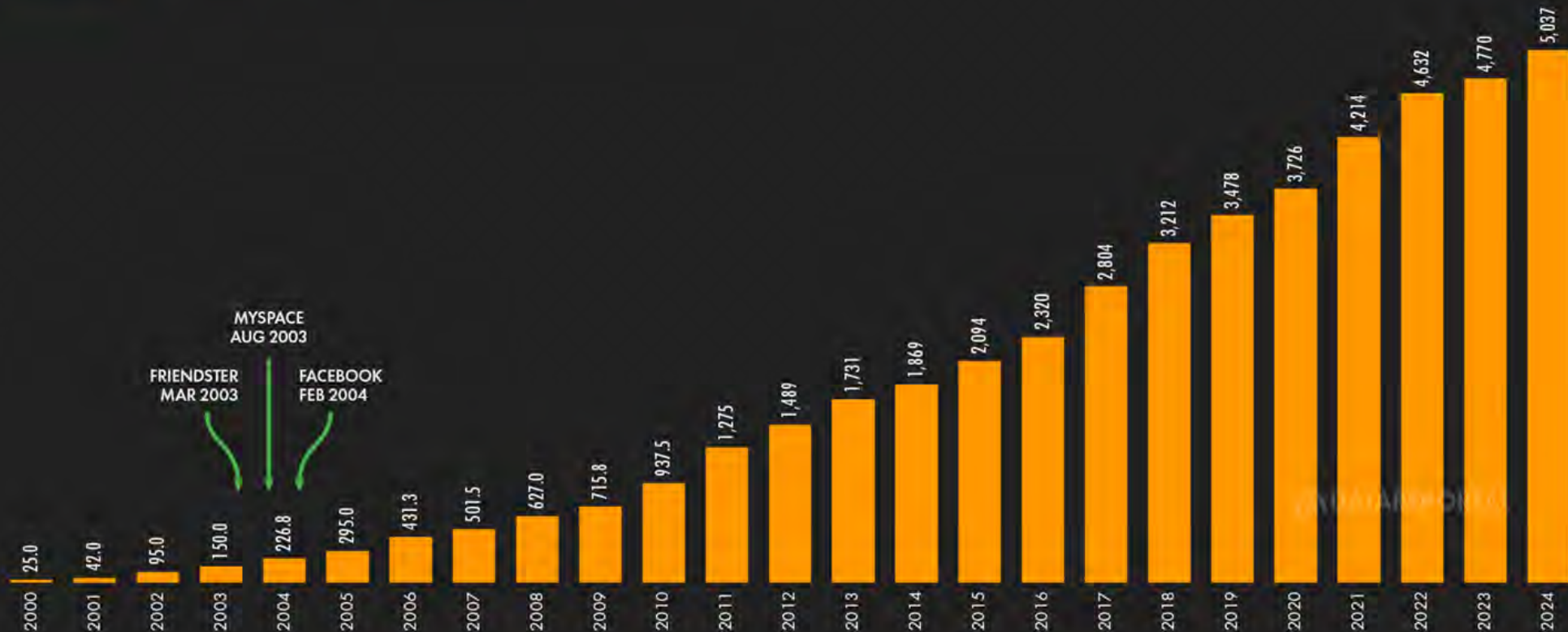
The WHO Twitter/X account has more
followers than McDonalds, Coca-Cola
and Walmart combined.



JAN
2024

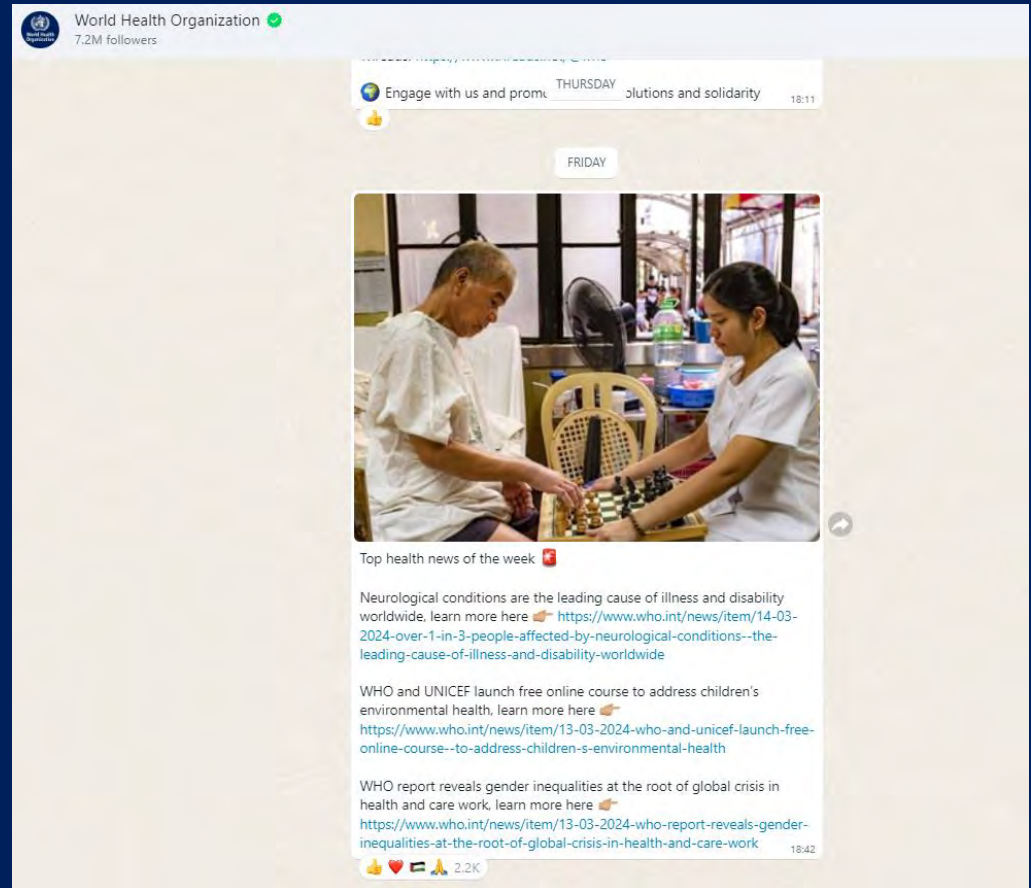
SOCIAL MEDIA TIMELINE

NUMBER OF SOCIAL MEDIA USER IDENTITIES (IN MILLIONS) OVER TIME



✔ WHO is also on WhatsApp

WhatsApp – A typical android users opens WhatsApp 911 million times per month; daily open rate 83%





Young & restless

Our WHO followers, most are in the 18-24, and the 25-34 age categories. More men than women followers.

WHO SOCIAL MEDIA MANTRA

Counting more than
likes & impressions



Is your audience sharing and
talking about your content





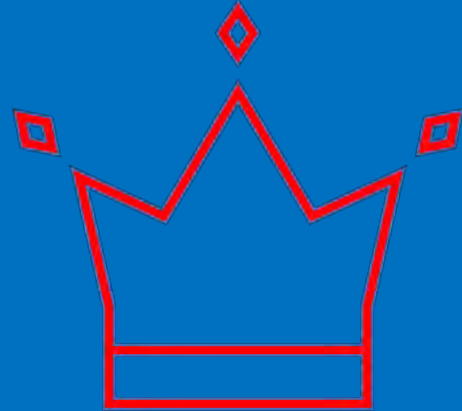
Success on social

- Serving communities**
- Building trust**
- Being purposeful & intentional**

UNDERSTANDING OUR AUDIENCE

Client is king

- **Assess their needs**
- **Behaviours**
- **Patterns**
- **Sentiments**



World Health
Organization

75

HEALTH
FOR ALL

WHO SOCIAL MEDIA

Public health advice, diving beyond normative work and unpacking it.

- Leveraging news moments**
- Strong and innovative stories**
- Curious copy, educational**



World Health
Organization



HEALTH
FOR ALL

Sustaining attention is difficult. Innovation, agility, and calculated risk-taking are necessary.

TAILORING

THINK
ABOUT
THINGS
DIFFERENTLY

**Every
platform is
different**

There's no health without mental health.



★ MOST WANTED ★ DEADLY AND DISABLING FUNGI



Cryptococcus neoformans
can infect the brain causing death and serious disability



Aspergillus fumigatus
mainly affects the lungs, medications lose effect



Candida auris
Hangs around in hospitals for months, hard to medicate or clean away



Candida albicans
enters the blood causing deadly infections

EXAMPLES

We make sure that all technical content is repurposed in a way that is very public facing.



- Eye-catching
- Thumb-stopping
- Informative & action-oriented

EXAMPLES

We make sure that all technical content is repurposed in a way that is very public facing.

Our motto: Eye-catching
Thumbstopping,

INSULIN DOES NOT BELONG TO ME, IT BELONGS TO THE WORLD.

ACCESS TO INSULIN IS STILL OUT OF REACH FOR MANY WHO NEED IT

1922

TODAY

Frederick Banting, co-discoverer of insulin

World Health Organization

This infographic is split into two vertical panels. The left panel, labeled '1922', shows a man in a blue suit holding a small white pill. The right panel, labeled 'TODAY', shows a hand holding a small vial of insulin above several raised hands, symbolizing need. The text at the top of each panel contrasts the historical view of insulin as a common pill with the current reality of it being inaccessible to many.

Date me

NOPE

E-cigarette, 18

Looking for a harmful connection that will likely damage your heart

World Health Organization

This graphic is styled like a social media post on a red background. It features a photo of a hand holding an e-cigarette with a red stamp that says 'NOPE'. Below the photo is a caption: 'E-cigarette, 18' and 'Looking for a harmful connection that will likely damage your heart'. At the bottom are icons for a share, a heart, and a star.

**BREAST
CANCER!**

Detect Treat Recover

This graphic features six stylized purple breast icons arranged in a 2x3 grid. The bottom two icons in the second column are shaded with a stippled pattern to represent cancer. Below the icons, the words 'BREAST' and 'CANCER!' are written in large, bold, purple letters. At the bottom, there is a navigation bar with the words 'Detect', 'Treat', and 'Recover' and a play button icon.

**WE NEED
TO LEARN ABOUT**

**HEALTHY
RELATIONSHIPS
AND OUR RIGHTS**

This graphic has a purple background and features an illustration of a diverse group of people. The text 'WE NEED TO LEARN ABOUT' is at the top in large, bold, white letters. Below it, a white box contains the text 'HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS AND OUR RIGHTS' in bold, purple letters.

Speaking **fluent social entails –
writing well, listening well, using
powerful visuals, storytelling and
meeting **audience's needs &
expectations****

WHO SOCIAL MEDIA

CHANGE IS THE ONLY CONSTANT ON SOCIAL
Convert your audience into loyalists,
play the long-game don't take short-
cuts



World Health
Organization

75

HEALTH
FOR ALL

Tapping into fandom

Fandom, can you leverage that to reach the masses?

K-pop fans with different ideologies and from throughout the globe retweeted Tedros' message making it the most shared mask-wearing tweet.



Online Social Networks and Media
Volumes 37–38, September 2023, 100267



Parasocial diffusion: K-pop fandoms help drive COVID-19 public health messaging on social media

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Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus

@DrTedros

Thank you, #BTS for the uplifting #BTS_Dynamite and for reminding the #BTSARMY and the rest of us to #WearAMask and take care of our health and well-being during this #COVID19 pandemic.



11:44 PM · Aug 21, 2020

1,188

38.6K

86.3K

1,335

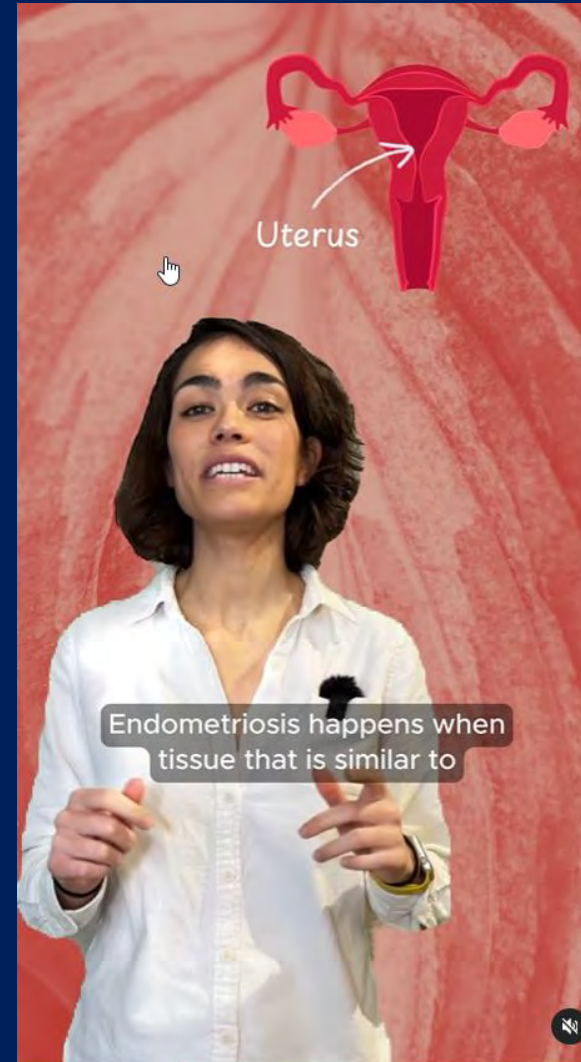
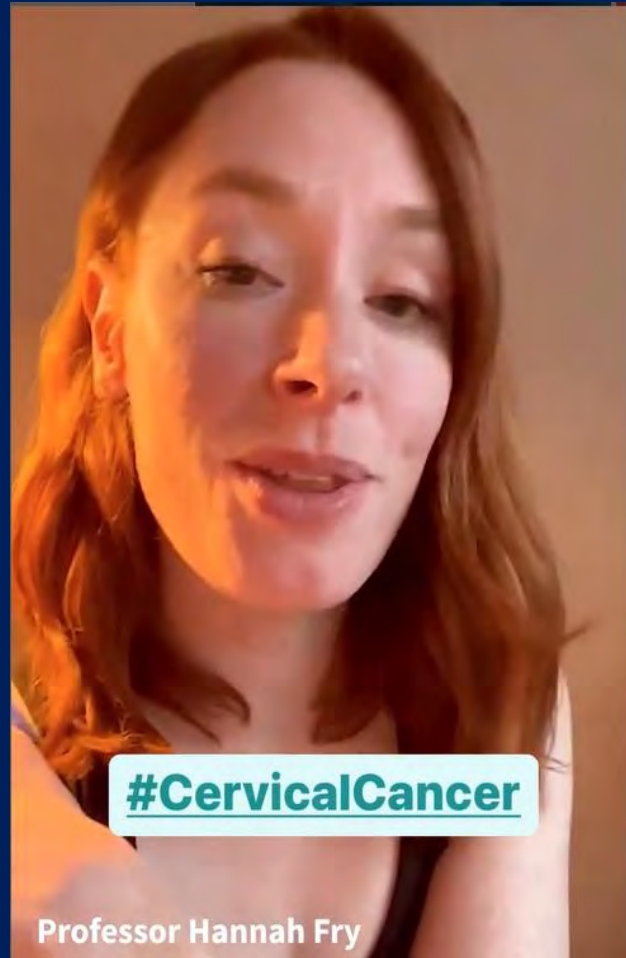


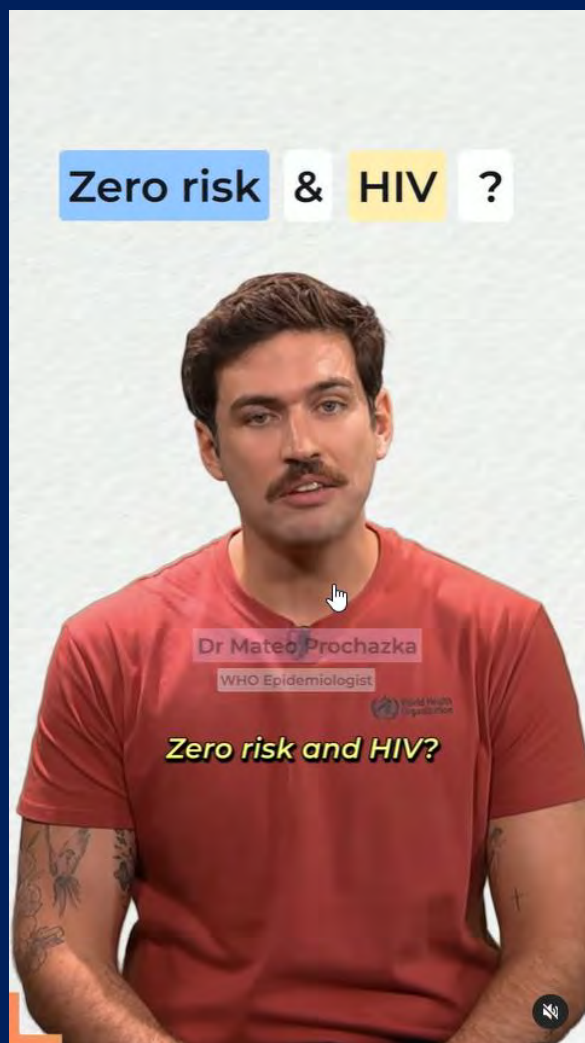
Spotlighting women's health

- No branding
- On point with WHO's advocacy on cervical cancer
- Humanizing portrait
- Call to action – *get your smear tests! HPV Vaccine...*
- Young female – closer to our audience base
- Explaining endometriosis – talking about medical gaslighting

1.4 million views – Cervical cancer

1.1 million views – Endometriosis





Experts

People on social are hungry for credible voices Find answers

665K views on Andy Seale's video regarding Mpox and how it spreads
And tackling stigma

1 million views on effective HIV treatment on the concept of undetectable = untransmittable

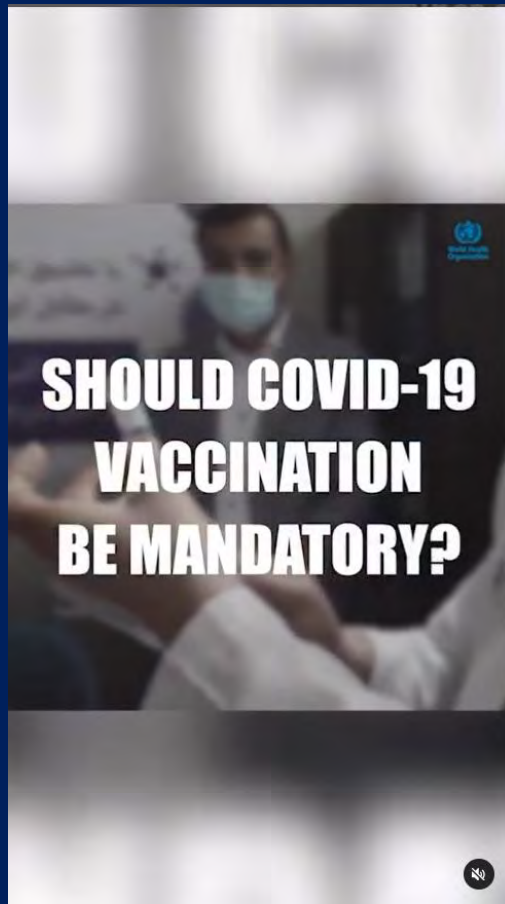
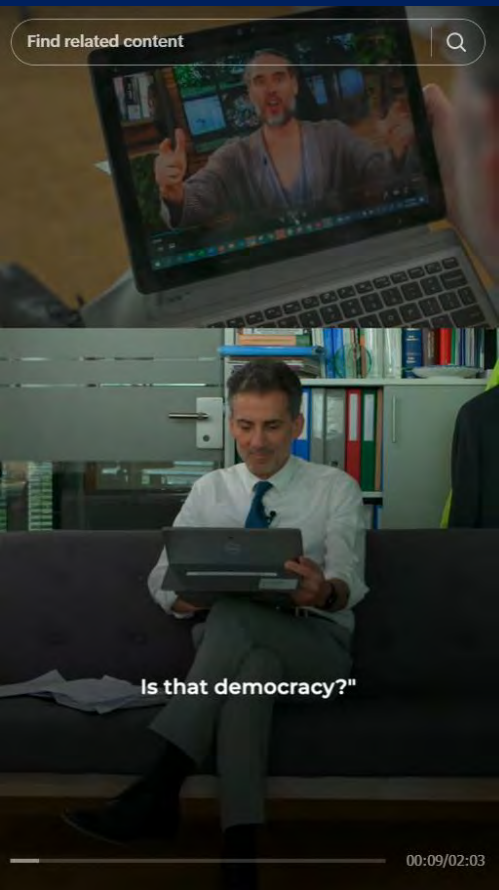
People on social are hungry for credible voices

Learn the truth
Find answers or Mike Ryan's
video regarding COVID-19 vaccine

Getting seasoned spokespersons the front-seat on social.

Clipping their bytes, helping them answer our audiences' burning questions

Making them look approachable



Experts

People on social are hungry
for credible voices

Learn the truth

Find answers

Director-General of WHO on harms of vaping
and tobacco-industry

100K views on TikTok

Same video on Instagram reached 1.2
million





**We engage with influencers
who can tell our story better
than us...**

Influencers

Dr Karen Tang – using WHO messages – created an Instagram reel on Safe Abortion Day

Make social relatable.

267K views





This is what happens when
you litter a cigarette filter.

**This video got us 7 million views in less
than 72 hours.**

It went viral.

Influencers

Have fun but convey your organization's mandate/message

QuickStyle and Sherrie Silver talking about physical fitness

3.5 million views

Social media is where people doom-scroll, you want to give a message in a way that people can consume





We regret that we could
have saved our daughter -

Portraits

Video formats

Keeping it short
Simplifying technical information.
Authenticity.

**3.9 million views –
Instagram Reel**

Tell stories

Find emotional hooks, be authentic

Bringing humanity to the forefront.
Making the personal, public.

People connect to stories. Punch lines.
Hope. Motivation. A call to action.

Storytelling via
videos



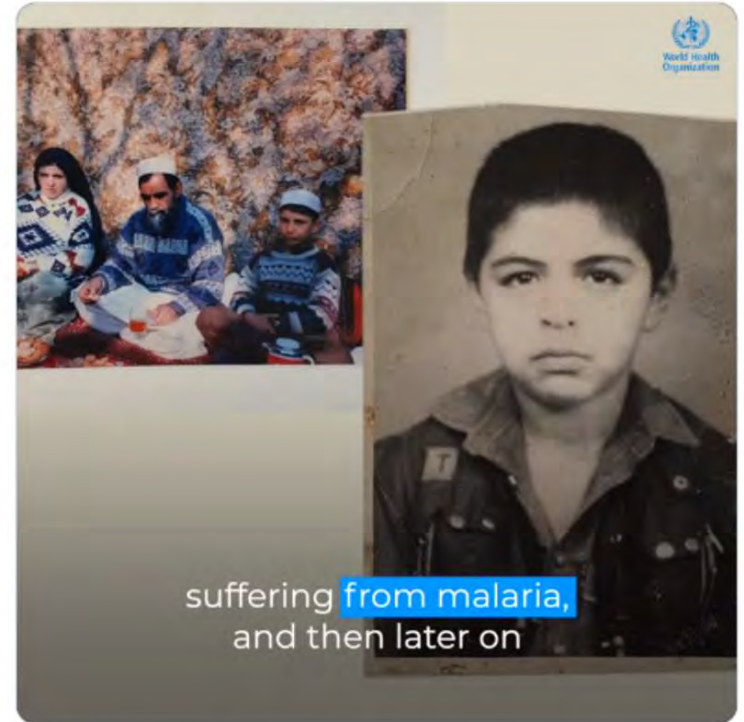
World Health Organization (WHO) ✓

@WHO

Watch [@DrWaheedArian](#) talk about the health challenges he had faced as a refugee from [#Afghanistan](#). His early childhood experience led him to become a doctor in the UK.

Both the physical & mental health of refugees need to be addressed, he says.

[▶ bit.ly/3OnLzSI](https://bit.ly/3OnLzSI)



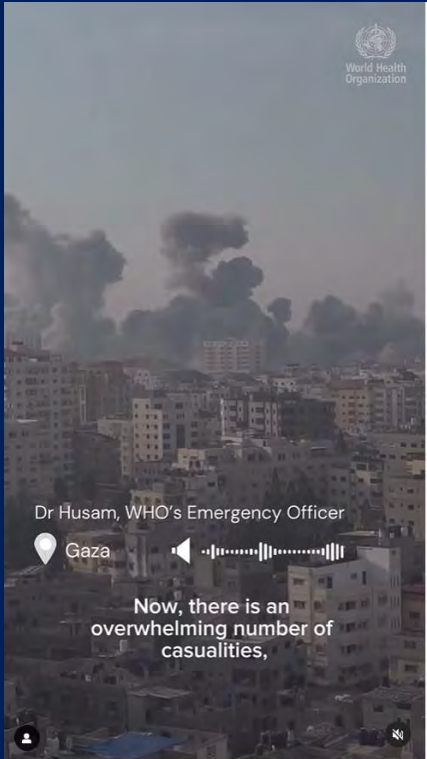
7:32 PM · Aug 15, 2022

2.6 million and 1.4 million views on these stories

Emergencies

We operate like a newsroom during an emergency

Breaking down information during an unfolding crisis.



Filling information needs

6.9 million views on TikTok

Stay relevant

Satiate public interest

Find related content

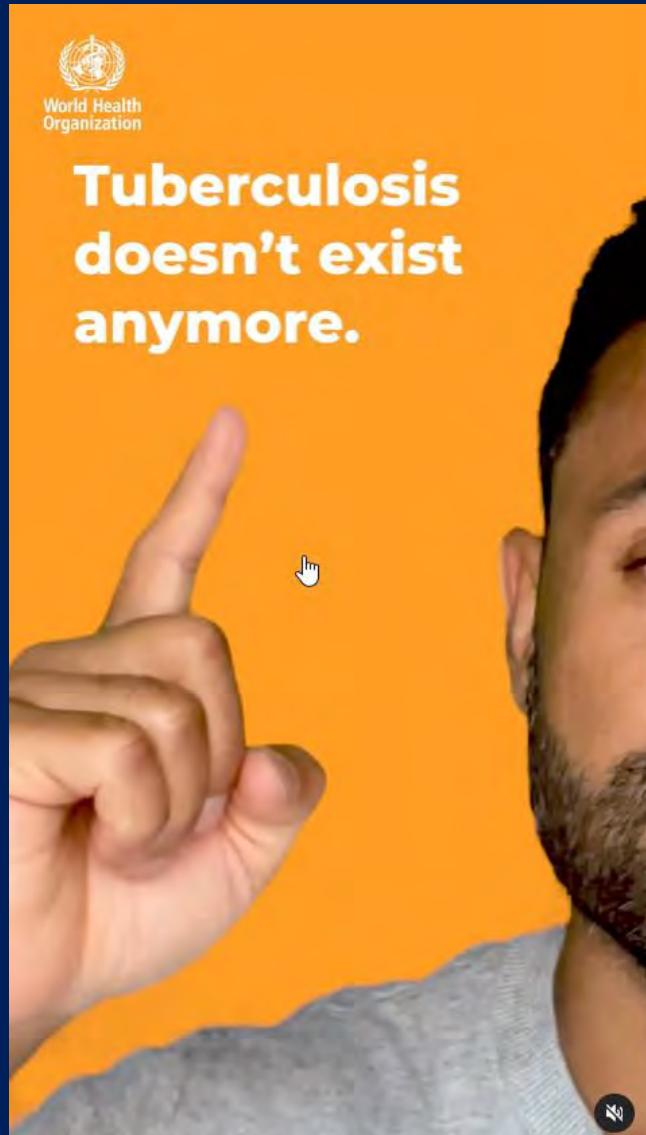
LESSONS ON LONG COVID



I think we are learning
a little bit more

Filling information needs

- Stay relevant**
- Satiate public interest**
- Breaking myths**



Lives; Pressers + Social Lives

BREAKING

"Yesterday, the Emergency Committee met for the 15th time and recommended to me that I declare an end to the public health emergency of international concern. I have accepted that advice"-

@DrTedros #COVID19



3:24 PM · May 5, 2023 · 3.6M Views

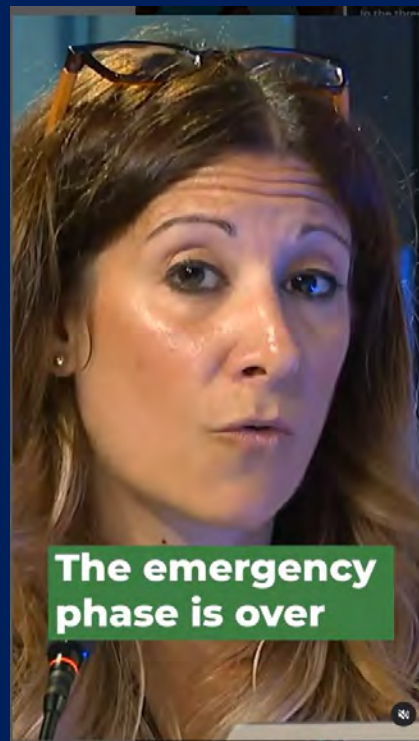
This reel was a clip from a social media live show:
1.2 million views

World Health Organization (WHO) @WHO · May 5
LIVE: Media briefing on #COVID19 and global health issues with @DrTedros

means is that it's time for countries to transition from emergency mode to managing COVID-19
Who - 198K viewers
7:30 / 1:18:07

World Health Organization (WHO) @WHO
LIVE: Media briefing on #COVID19 and global health issues with @DrTedros

277 1,241 1,591 1.2M



7 August 2022



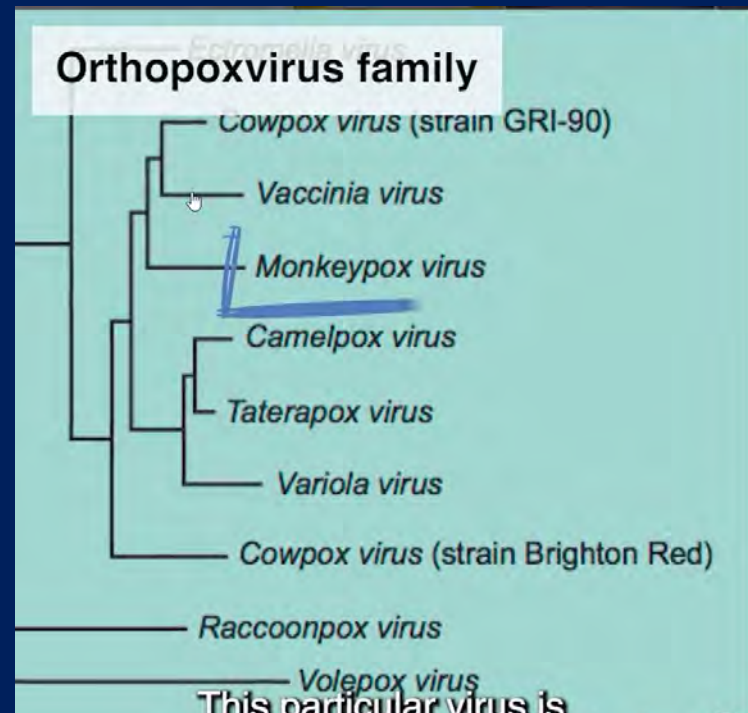
Dr Rosamund Lewis
Monkeypox Technical Lead, WHO

their own level of risk
and wishes to lower their own level risk

Social Media Lives

Clips from pressers, expert insights

Explainers



Creative disruptions

Taking risks on social – *is risky!*

Key components of this video and its virality:

- ✓ Uncomfortable truths
- ✓ Calling out the anti-vax community
- ✓ Strong language and tone
- ✓ Bold pop-art graphics
- ✓ A scientist who is in the public eye

Storytelling via videos





SHARE IF YOU CARE

What we measure?

Shareability

Video retention and shares

Comments – especially the ones filled with love & hope.

WHY SHAREABILITY? It means our content piqued the audience's interest enough for them to talk about it.

- Facebook shares
- Video downloads on X
- Unique subscribers of LinkedIn newsletters and shares
- Retweets, engagements
- LinkedIn Shares
- Remixing Instagram reels, audio
- Saved posts on Instagram
- & more...

1.8 million LinkedIn newsletter subscribers

Publishing



Know your mental health rights, emerging health needs in crises

 World Health Organization
5,253,765 followers

October 16, 2023

 Open Immersive Reader

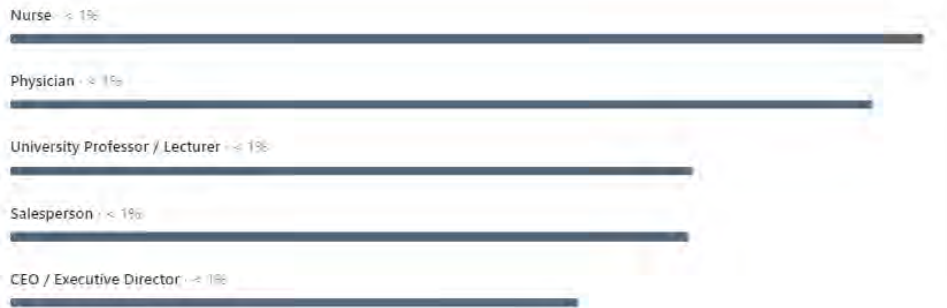
Newsletters are NOT dead

- ❑ LinkedIn is now the NEW cool kid on the block
- ❑ Publishing is groovy again
- ❑ Gen Z feels safe and heard on LinkedIn

We launched our LinkedIn newsletter during World Health Assembly testing out longform content

Within 6 editions we hit a million subscribers

Be ahead of the curve
Take risks early, disrupt



What works

**De-jargonizing
and humanizing
content**



**Maintaining high
news moments**

**Bold design,
minimal but
attractive**



**Having a clean timeline
flow**

**Public-facing
content**



**Programming for
international days**

**Tailoring for the
platform**



**Responding to social
media trends that are
relevant**

**Very short video
products – 30 to 45
seconds**



**Using influencers
to build
community
engagement**

What does not work

- Non-public facing messages** ❌
- Technical jargon** ❌
- Institutional and top-heavy messages** ❌
- Webinars and events** ❌
- Closed-door meetings** ❌
- Graphics which are slogan-based, text heavy** ❌
- Very long videos. On social 2-min is a long video.** ❌
- Not tailored to the platforms and its ecosystem.** ❌
- Too many talking heads.** ❌
- Not meeting the audience where it is at.** ❌

THE SOCIAL MEDIA UNIVERSE

MAU: 2.9B

Facebook is still the world's largest social network, serving one third of humanity in an average month.



INSTAGRAM
Meta Platforms
MAU: 1.2B

DOUYIN
ByteDance
MAU: 600M

TikTok (Douyin in China) has experienced meteoric growth in recent years. The app is a rare example of a Chinese tech brand crossing over into Western markets.

PEACH
MAU: Unknown

VERO
MAU: Unknown



LINKEDIN
Microsoft
MAU: 300M

LinkedIn continues to grow both its active users and its revenue.

TEAMS
Microsoft
MAU: 250M

SKYPE
Microsoft
MAU: 300M

Humanity is hardwired to be social, and as a result, a universe of social media and messaging platforms have sprung up to meet this demand.

Much like the real universe, these platforms are constantly evolving. This visualization is an overview of the services we use to connect with one another, from niche apps to gigantic global networks.

MAU = Monthly active users



HORIZON WORLDS
Meta Platforms
MAU: 200M

In Nov 2022, Meta slashed 11,000 jobs, after its social VR platform failed to take off as quickly as hoped.

PINTEREST
Pinterest
MAU: 450M



TWITTER
Twitter
MAU: 300M

It remains to be seen how Twitter's change in ownership and restructuring will affect its userbase over the long term.

MASTODON
Open Source
MAU: 655K

This decentralized social media platform has been around since 2016, but user growth has shot up as people seek alternatives to Twitter.

TUMBLR
Automattic
MAU: 10M

TWITCH
Amazon
MAU: 140M

NEIGHBORS
Amazon
MAU: 10M

NEXTDOOR
Nextdoor Holdings
MAU: 20M



CITIZEN
Spn Inc.
MAU: 5M

Neighborhood-based apps have created more local connections, but critics point to an increasing focus on crime and surveillance.

VIBER
Rakuten
MAU: 200M



YOUTUBE
Alphabet
MAU: 2.3B

VK
VK Co Ltd.
MAU: 67M

GOOGLE+
Alphabet

Google tried for years to gain traction with G+, but eventually shuttered the social media network in 2019.

CLUBHOUSE
Alpha Exploration
MAU: 3.5M

VINE
Twitter

Twitter's iconic 15s video format that the defunct, but popular video app, Vine, could be reborn in the near future.

WECHAT
Tencent
MAU: 1.2B

WeChat is not only China's most popular messaging service, it also bundles a plethora of services into one super app.

THANK YOU

Follow me at:

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