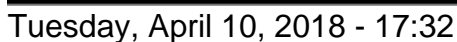




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Vaccine [7]

Nowadays, social media is an increasingly common and integral part of all people's lives. In ASSET theory and practice about social

media have been explored extensively over the four years of work (2014-2017). It has been done by studying [8] to what extent epidemic or pandemic preparedness and response are covered by contents shared on the main social network platforms. Specific studies have been developed such as analysing [9] the social accounts and profiles of relevant pharmaceutical companies. Some target groups have been asked on social media: professionals during training (Summer Schools [10]) or attending project meetings (brokerage and final events [11]), lay public (through the citizens? consultations [12] or in several initiatives [13] delivered at local community level), significant stakeholders in the field (by the High Level Policy Forum, the dedicated portal [14] or the thematic platform [15]).

Social media and vaccinations

ASSET represented a quite huge program in terms of people, disciplines and subjects involved. Within the wide range of topic associations, connections between social media and vaccinations have been a major focus because one of the main trigger in dealing with the so called vaccine hesitancy. ? *Social media intervention improves vaccine acceptance?* is affirmed by Anita Slomski in her article [16] published on *JAMA* 2018 basing on findings from a study [17] in *Pediatrics* that shows how providing mothers-to-be with web-based vaccine information and social media capabilities increased infant immunization rates . The trial randomly assigned 888 pregnant women (3:2:1) to a website with vaccine information and interactive social media components (VSM), a website with vaccine information (VI), or to usual care (UC). The VSM intervention allowed users to interact with a team of vaccine experts and with other parents, the VI intervention presented website content only, and the usual care group received routine paediatric preventive care and information on recommended vaccines prior to scheduled visits. Infants in the VSM and VI group were more likely to be up-to-date with their vaccinations at age 200 days (92.5%

and 91.4%, respectively) compared with the usual care group (86%) thus confirming that, in a world where interventions to address vaccine hesitancy and increase vaccine acceptance are needed, providing web-based vaccine information with social media applications during pregnancy can positively influence parental vaccine behaviours.

Social media and specific populations

Here we come to another key issue in ASSET: gender pattern, mainly linked to vaccine uptake and vaccination but populated with several contents since the very beginning. This topic has been in fact analysed under different perspectives, in public health as well as per research:

-Raising awareness on gender issues in epidemics and pandemics^[18]

-Zika epidemics according a gender perspective

^[19]

-Sex and gender in clinical trials^[20]

Another operational interpretation applied was according to the *Life-course approach to Immunisation* that brought to highlight gender-specific information in different population groups such as pregnant ^[21] women, elderly ^[22], young school students ^[23]. Dealing with social media, even children are encompassed as relevant target group: *Children and social media* is actually the title of an article ^[24] published on *The Lancet* ^[25] in January 2018 exploring the social media experience of children aged 8-12 years. Actually, despite a minimum access age of 13 years for some platforms, the reach of social media has outpaced research into potential benefits and harms for younger users. The report is based on digital tasks and interviews with 16 girls and 16 boys in small focus groups with a mix of ethnicity, religion, urban-rural residence, and socioeconomic status. The report examines how children access and use social media, the joys and sorrows it brings them, online interactions with peers, and how patterns of use evolve as children mature from primary to secondary school. In the end, recommendations to improve child welfare are

made for parents, schools, companies, and the government.

The findings should be set within the context of two previous studies by the same Children's Commissioner in 2017: Growing up Digital ^[26] and The Case for a UNCRC General Comment on Children's Rights and Digital Media ^[27] which included also adolescents who represent a third of internet users. With opportunities come risks: if on one hand to those who feel marginalised by migration, disability, or sexuality, social media provides access to information and introduces a wider selection of peers, on the other a digital divide can result between children with vs. without access to social media platforms.

Furthermore, the ability of social media to mould attitudes, values, and behaviours?particularly in vulnerable people?has both positive and negative consequences. A number of recommendations are also provided to minimise risk and address the needs of children and their emotional safety online. Key to protecting children on social media is more responsibility and better accountability from the private international companies that operate these public spaces. Finally, because social media provide such a rich opportunity to unite generations, companies shall be encouraged to commission, publish, and implement research on how to make their platforms safer, friendlier, and healthier for all. Actions like these would be appropriate as per format and setup aspects, but also relating to contents disseminated: *what about empowerment of young people on non-early childhood or adolescent vaccinations?*

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ASSET

Action plan on **Science in Society** related issues in **Epidemics and Total pandemics**
European Commission

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