
Social Media Strategy

What to do when you've become a target of anti-vaccine forces on social media



Introduction

Congratulations! Someone put a call to action targeting you, probably because you posted supporting vaccines. You win:

- A giant microbe stuffy of your choice
- A massive headache
- Our admiration for your fortitude



What to remember:

- You are doing something important through social media.
- You have spoken up for protecting your patients and the community.
- You are in line with the recommendations of local, national and international organizations, and a near-global expert consensus.
- These people do not know you. It's not you they are targeting, even if it feels that way: it's "the man" they want to stick it to, a giant amorphous being they think has conspired against them.
- Many of the people targeting you are doing so out of their own deeply held beliefs and fears. They are a very small group of well-meaning, deeply incorrect people who think they are doing good by targeting you. It is natural for them to seek a villain for their self-image as a hero, though neither casting fits reality.
- This shall pass.
- It may take some time before it passes.

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- Do take breaks when needed. It's perfectly fine to turn off notifications for a while if a post gets overwhelming. You do not have to be constantly there. On Facebook personal timelines, you can make posts "friends only" when you need a break. It's especially okay to ignore people on Twitter.
 - Screenshot egregious behavior, to keep a record.
 - Report to Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc., any cases of abuse or harassment you consider egregious.
 - Call in reinforcements from other physicians or by contacting admins of large groups/ pages. You can contact Vaccinate Your Family or Voices for Vaccines at any time to ask for help, including technical help in disabling reviews/ comments. Ask reinforcements to leave positive comments!
 - Do like – and/or respond – to supportive, science-based comments to bump them up.

More steps you can take:

- Block people who abuse reasonable community standards by:
 - Using foul, abusive, and hateful language
 - Posting off-topic
 - Plagiarizing (copying and pasting without attribution)
 - Posting the same comment across various threads or spamming a thread with long, serial comments that would be difficult for any reasonable human being to respond to.
 - Fake profiles and "Twitter Eggs" (brand new profiles with no followers). These profiles were likely set up just to harass you.
- If the social media page is run by your alone, consider sharing the burden with others in your clinic or others you trust.
- Disable the ability of people to reply with photo comments as those do not promote honest conversation.
- Consider not directly responding to anti-vaccine commenters. If you want to correct misinformation, post a comment of your own or a quote retweet instead. Responding will likely just garner more attention for the unwanted comment.
- Mute or "soft block" folks on Twitter (by blocking and then unblocking them). Muting helps you ignore them. Soft blocks stop them from following you without them realizing it.

Some definite don'ts:

- Do not respond to anti-vaccine personal messages, even if they sound like they're just offering information. Once you respond, they have access to your messenger unless you block them.
- Do not interact with abusive commenters.
- Do not lose your cool and correct misinformation by getting personal. It's not personal, and it isn't about you.



For future consideration:

The more you discuss vaccines on social media, the less blowback you will feel. People will learn how to interact with you on the topic.

- What is your broad social media strategy?
- Do you have clearly defined rules for others who interact with you on social media?
- Can you interact on social media as a member of a team instead of going it alone? Can you share a page or an account with others in order to take the heat off of you?
- Are you sharing meaningful content that promotes the idea that vaccines are safe and important? Good. Keep doing that.