

MISINFORMATION IN THE AGE OF COVID-19



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WHAT IS MISINFORMATION?

Misinformation is false information that is spread, regardless of whether there is intent to mislead. It is designed to grab our attention with the goal of selling something, eroding trust, and/or polarizing. Misinformation tends to prey on our anxieties, fears, and emotions. In the case of COVID-19, misinformation feeds off our desire to protect ourselves and our loved ones.

Source: dictionary.com: Dr. Amy Collier

**COVID-19
FAKE NEWS**

Source: <https://infodemic.blog/>



STOP



INVESTIGATE THE
SOURCE



FIND BETTER COVERAGE



TRACE CLAIMS, QUOTES
AND MEDIA TO THE
ORIGINAL CONTEXT

SORTING FACT FROM FICTION

Misinformation spreads QUICKLY! But, don't worry, you can sort through the information using the SIFT method.

S

STOP! Check your emotions. Give yourself time to reevaluate what you just read. Don't immediately share something because you feel a strong emotion, surprise, or an irrepressible urge to share it. Instead, pull back, look into what you've read, and check that what you've read is factual before you share it with others.

I

INVESTIGATE the source! Don't look at what the source says about itself. Instead, find out what other sources say about it. Google the source and check to see if they have a wikipedia page or other forms of verification.

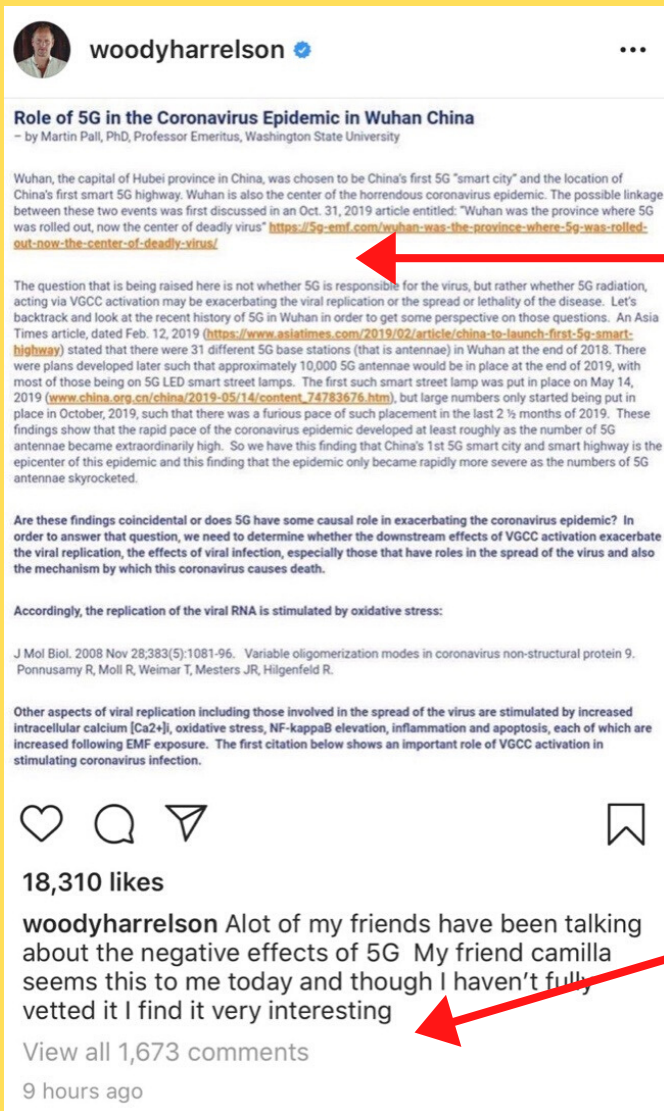
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FIND a better source and check to see if there's coverage from other sources. Search under 'News' in Google and read the story through more reputable sources. Make sure to cross-check and fact-check the information. Also, check the date of the article to make sure it's recent if you're trying to find recent information and vice versa.

T

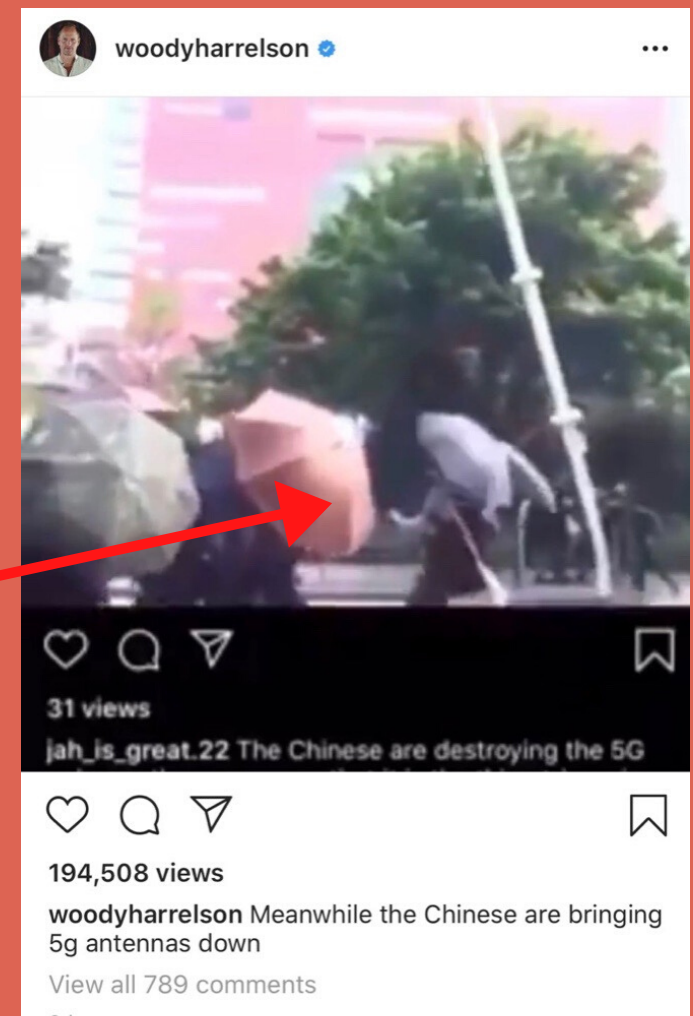
TRACE claims, quotes, and media to the original source to make sure the way the story, photo, or video is framed is correct. Read through the story and analyze it for yourself. Use Control-F to see if terms in the summary appear in the article. Check the date to make sure that the story is truly related to current events, and the information is up-to-date.

STOP



On April 1, 2020, American actor, Woody Harrelson shared information about 5G technology and its supposed relationship to the spread of COVID-19.

First, check in with your emotions. The information in these photos can be a bit alarming.



However, do not share this information until you've followed all the steps of the SIFT method to determine if the information is factual.

"Woody said 'I haven't fully vetted it I find it very interesting', yet he still chose to share the information he found. Please DO NOT do this. Only spread information you've fact-checked.

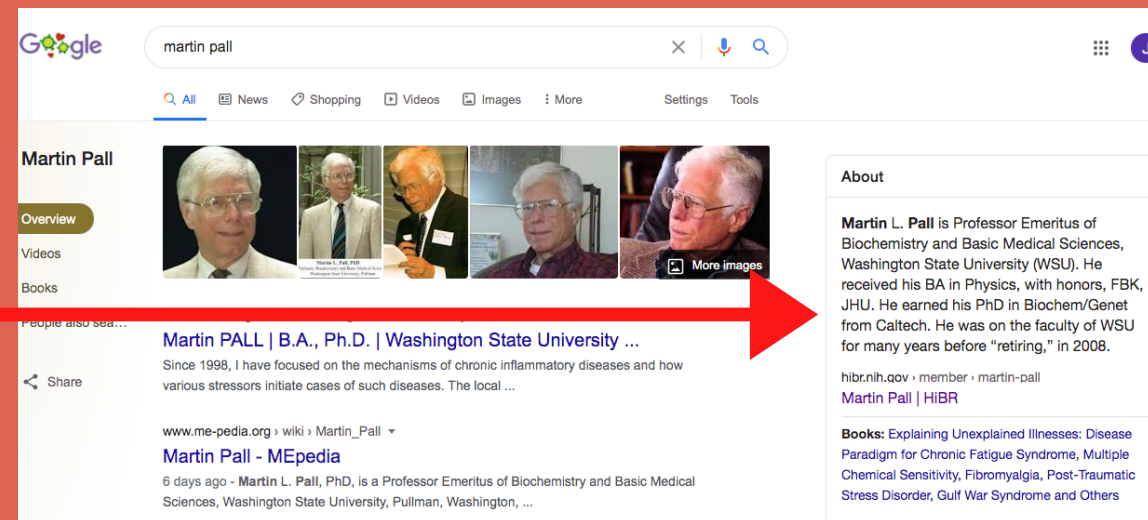
INVESTIGATE

THE SOURCE

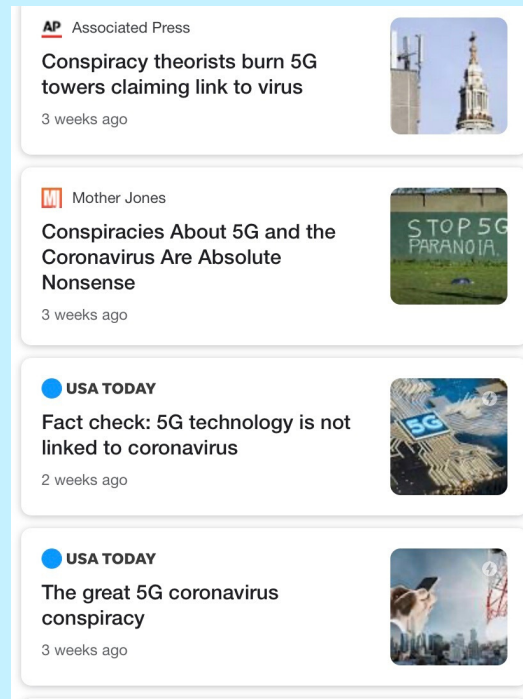
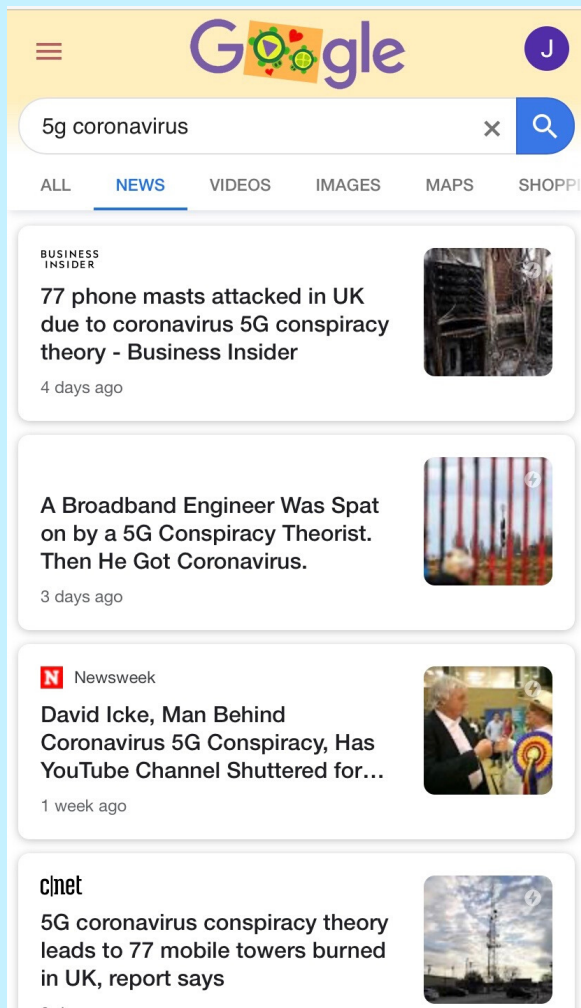


Actor Woody Harrelson spread the information on his Instagram, however, the original publisher is Martin Pall, a Professor at Washington State University.

After, searching Martin Pall in the Washington State University directory and googling his name, we see that he's a real professor. Now, we must cross-check his information with other sources before we accept it to be true.

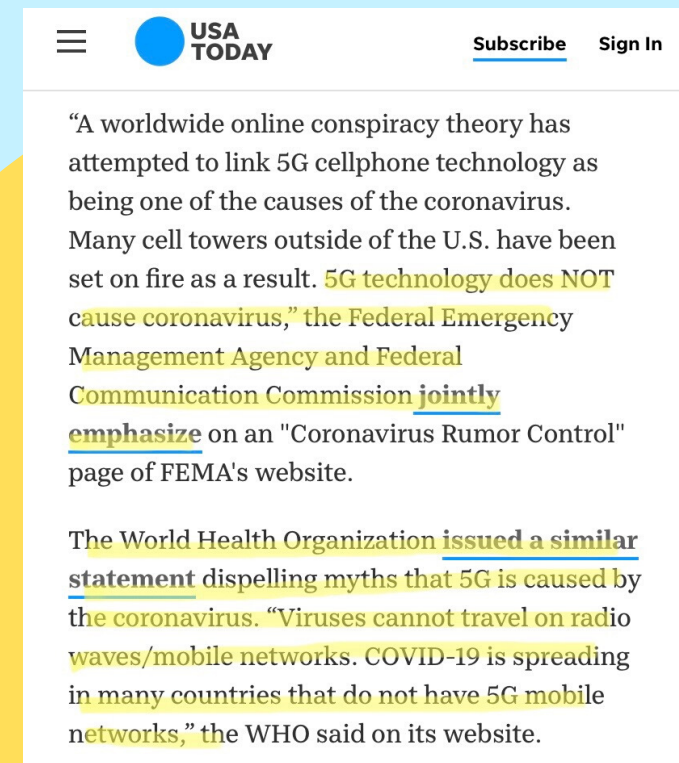


FIND BETTER SOURCES



After, searching under 'News' in Google, we can see that the information Woody Harrelson shared isn't supported by reputable news outlets. Instead, most news outlets claim there is no link between COVID-19 and 5G technology.

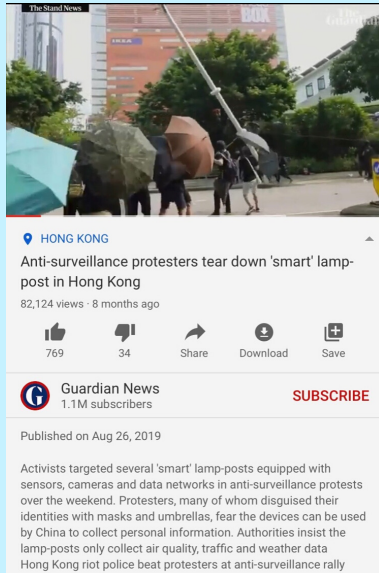
The *USA Today* article includes quotes from the Federal Emergency Management Agency, Federal Communication Commission, and the World Health Organization dispelling the myth that 5G technology increases the spread of COVID-19.



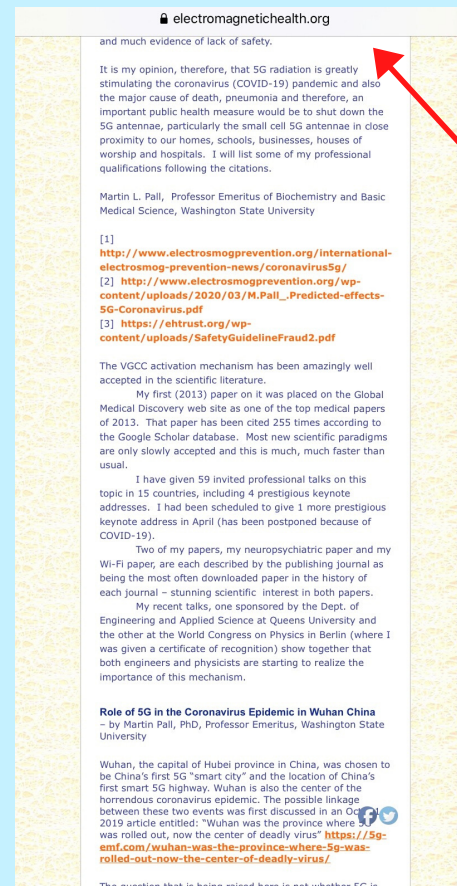
TRACE

CLAIMS, QUOTES, AND MEDIA TO THE ORIGINAL SOURCE

REAL NEWS



FAKE NEWS



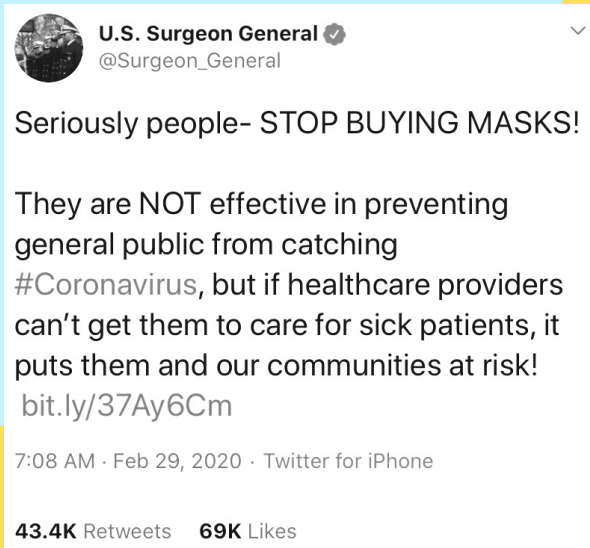
When you trace back to the original source, you'll notice that Professor Pall wrote "it is my opinion... that 5G is greatly stimulating the coronavirus...". It's important to recognize that it's his opinion because this distinguishes it from being trustworthy information.

When you find the original video of the "Chinese destroying the 5G", you'll see that Woody Harrelson shared a video of Hong Kong protestors tearing down smart lamp-posts. It was also a video posted in August of 2019, which was before the COVID-19 pandemic.

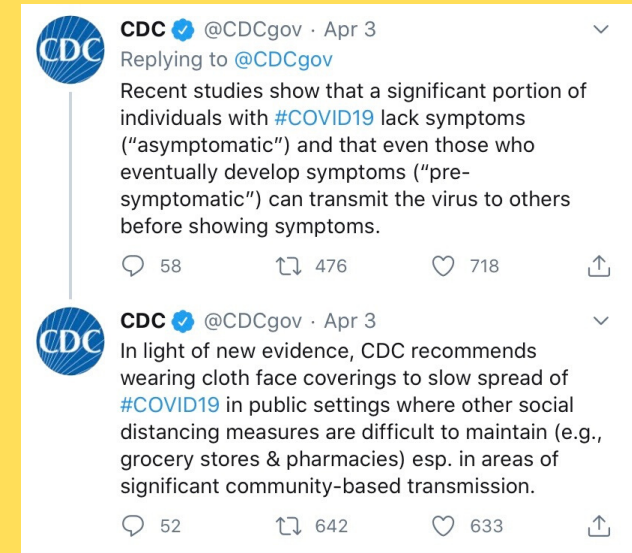
Source: Guardian News

Source: <https://electromagnetichealth.org/electromagnetic-health-blog/5g-covid-19-epidemic/>

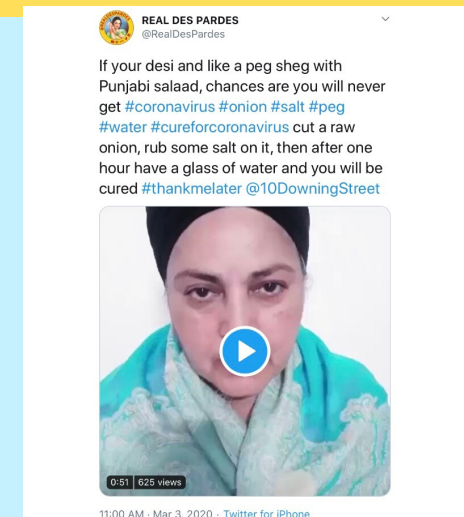
INCOMPLETE VS INACCURATE INFORMATION



COVID-19 has constantly been evolving and the “facts” of the situation are dynamic. They change as new information forces us to update our understanding of what is going on. For instance, the recommendations on face coverings have changed in a span of a little over a month. This is an example of **incomplete information** - it changes as scientists and researchers get more information. The information is updated based on new research.



There have been rumors about the relationship between onions and coronavirus. People have said the presence of onions in your house will prevent you from contracting COVID-19 while others have said eating onions can cure you of COVID-19. However, this is **inaccurate information** since there are no studies that support this claim.



Source: Twitter

RECAP

Now that you've learned the SIFT method, you can differentiate between real and fake news. Just remember to STOP, INVESTIGATE the source, FIND better coverage, and TRACE claims, quotes, and media to the original context. Stay safe and stay informed!