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## Vaccine

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# Opportunities and challenges of Web 2.0 for vaccination decisions

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## Abstract

A growing number of people use the Internet to obtain health information, including information about vaccines. Websites that allow and promote interaction among users are an increasingly popular source of health information. Users of such so-called Web 2.0 applications (e.g. social media), while still in the minority, represent a growing proportion of online communicators, including vocal and active anti-vaccination groups as well as public health communicators. In this paper, the authors: define Web 2.0 and examine how it may influence vaccination decisions; discuss how anti-vaccination movements use Web 2.0 as well as the challenges Web 2.0 holds for public health communicators; describe the types of information used in these different settings; introduce the theoretical background that can be used to design effective vaccination communication in a Web 2.0 environment; make recommendations for practice and pose open questions for future research. The authors conclude that, as a result of the Internet and Web 2.0,

private and public concerns surrounding vaccinations have the potential to virally spread across the globe in a quick, efficient and vivid manner. Web 2.0 may influence vaccination decisions by delivering information that alters the perceived personal risk of vaccine-preventable diseases or vaccination side-effects. It appears useful for public health officials to put effort into increasing the effectiveness of existing communication by implementing interactive, customized communication. A key step to providing successful public health communication is to identify those who are particularly vulnerable to finding and using unreliable and misleading information. Thus, it appears worthwhile that public health websites strive to be easy to find, easy to use, attractive in its presentation and readily provide the information, support and advice that the searcher is looking for. This holds especially when less knowledgeable individuals are in need of reliable information about vaccination risks and benefits.

## Highlights

- Anti-vacc groups use Web 2.0 for networking and coordinating lobbying.
- Public health communication should also implement interactive Web 2.0 communication.
- Person-centered Web 2.0 technique facilitates circulating anti-vacc narratives.
- Evidence-based information is less understandable and powerful than narratives.
- Public health websites should be easy to find and communicate apt to users'™ needs.



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## Keywords

Internet; Web 2.0; Anti-vaccination; Risk communication

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