



3RD VIRTUAL GLOBAL WHO INFODEMIC MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE

COVID-19 infodemic response overview for Mexico

DIGITAL POSTER

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infodemic
MANAGEMENT

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Coordination, resourcing and strategy

- In 2007 the Epidemic Intelligence Unit was created in the General Directorate of Epidemiology. Currently, this Unit contributes to the national strategy for the management of the infodemic phenomenon. Epidemic and infodemic control efforts are conducted in general by the Secretariat of Health, with the Undersecretary of Health and the General Director of Epidemiology working as spokesmen and as main actors against the infodemic.
- The management of the infodemic integrates various areas within the Secretariat of Health, such as the Epidemic Intelligence Unit, in charge of carrying out Event-Based Surveillance (EBS) and verification of information, and the General Directorate of Health Promotion as the main source of veracious information.
- The information is shared by the spokesmen on a daily basis at a press conference and is permanently available on the official government COVID-19 website, social networks among others.
- As of November 10, 251 press conferences have been held, broadcasted on television and on the Internet. In several of these conferences the subject of infodemic has been addressed. The infodemic has also been the main theme of some conferences of the President of Mexico.

Working relationships across society

- The Epidemic Intelligence Unit verifies epidemiological information, with a risk approach, in an inter-institutional and multisectoral manner.
- The Secretariat of Health works actively with stakeholders across society, particularly with the media, recognized as a fundamental actor for the dissemination of official and verified information.

Reporting and integration into decision-making

- Validated information is distributed among health decision makers.
- General Directorate of Health Promotion acts in accordance with what has been identified as an infodemic risk by the Epidemic Intelligence Unit.
- Social listening, Event-Based Surveillance and epidemic intelligence activities are conducted on a daily basis.
- Reports such as the *Alertómetro* and the Intelligence Briefing are available to decision makers through the phone app.

Integrated measurement, research and data analysis

- Standard Operating Procedures for EBS are established in the Epidemic Intelligence Unit Operating Manuals.
- Epidemiology Medical Residents, carry out EBS on a daily basis and generate reports, which are used at the technical level and for decision making.
- Among these reports there is the *Alertómetro*, a visual representation of the most relevant news identified in the last 24 hrs.
- Until November 10 for the COVID-19 infodemic response, the following reports have been generated:
 - 75 Special Monitoring Report
 - 142 Epidemic Intelligence Briefings
 - 117 *Alertómetros*
 - 312 Media Monitoring Reports
 - 207 Joint Media Monitoring reports, working with other health institutions

Evidence-based interventions and implementation research

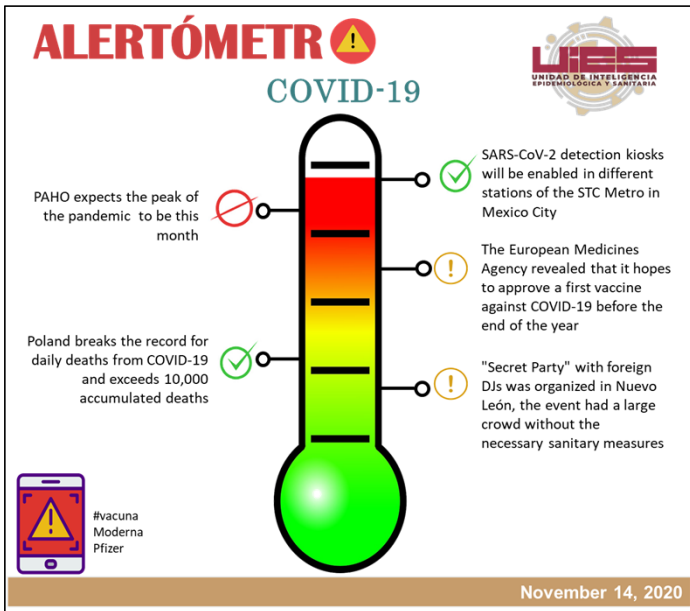
- At the state-level a network of Epidemic Intelligence Units have been also strengthened, the reports generated by the federal Epidemic Intelligence Unit are shared with this network daily.
- A platform was developed for this network to upload and share epidemic intelligence information, including infodemic risks.
- A mobile phone application was developed to facilitate access to information for decision-makers (only authorized personnel have access).
- Epidemic Intelligence activities are conducted with a priority approach to vulnerable groups.

What did infodemic management and response look like before the COVID-19 infodemic in your country?

- Although the phenomenon of disinformation was identified through Event Based Surveillance, there was no specific plan against the infodemic.
- Information verification methods existed, but they were not as important as they are now.
- The verified information used to be sent by email to the state and federal authorities.

What has changed in infodemic management and health misinformation response since start of COVID-19?

- There is a sense of urgency in the dissemination of validated information. It has become necessary to be quick or even anticipate the spread of fake news.
- A mobile phone application was developed for decision makers, who receive information from the Epidemic Intelligence Unit, this allows spokespersons to have access to search trends, social media trends, relevant news in public conversation and verified information, through the reports generated.
- Reports are now generated with a more visual approach, allowing faster identification of key information.
- A website on epidemiological information (<https://covid19.sinave.gob.mx/>) and one on information for the general population (<https://coronavirus.gob.mx/>) were created.



- Information has been verified.
- Information is in the process of verification.
- Fake news, information is proven false.

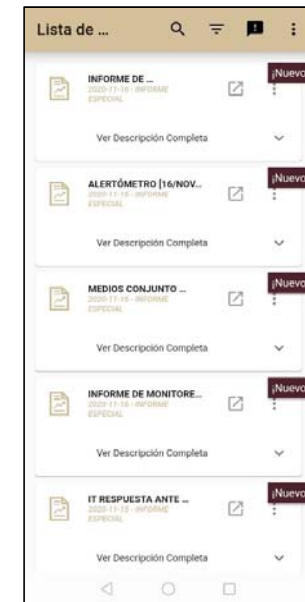
Alertómetro: an epidemic intelligence tool

- The Epidemic Intelligence Unit, through Event-Based Surveillance, identifies data or information considered as a potential risk to health, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- This information, called *Signal*, is chosen according to its magnitude, transcendence, and potential to cause misinformation among the public, to guide decision making at the technical level.
- Common sources of signals are social media, traditional media, blogs, and even rumors or other communications from the public.

Factchecking and risk assessment

- Signals are then verified with official sources, such as Ministries of Health, Health Institutes, pharmaceutical companies press releases, among others. Once the *Signal* is verified, it becomes an *Event*.
- Events are then assigned a risk level, represented by the colors in the Alertómetro.
- An assessment of search trends is carried out on Google and Social Media and included in the Alertómetro.
- Links to the complete validated information are included when the Alertómetro is distributed to authorities and decision makers.
- Verified information is distributed with health authorities via the mobile phone app.

Epidemic Reports Platform



Mobile phone app for decision makers and spokesperson

What are the lessons learned from the experience of infodemic and infodemic response in COVID-19?

- Time is an essential factor. Disinformation spreads even faster than the virus itself.
- Collaboration with health promotion authorities is essential.
- The promotional messages are directed from what is identified in the *Alertómetro*.
- Early warning and timely detection of risks is crucial: the Epidemic Intelligence Unit identified on December 31, 2020, the notification by China of a cluster of cases of atypical pneumonia that would end up becoming the COVID-19 pandemic, allowing Mexico to follow up the event and issue verified information to combat misinformation from day one.
- The implementation of new technologies allowed the improvement of the strategy against the infodemic, as well as the communication amongst the State and Federal Epidemic Intelligence Units network.

What advice would you give to other countries developing their own infodemic response plans?

- Integrate technology as the basis of Event-Based Surveillance for timely detection.
- The integration of a multidisciplinary team, including Event-Based Surveillance.
- Guide communication actions to society based on Event-Based Surveillance.

What are your plans for future infodemic management work in your country?

- Expand and consolidate the operation network with the states to strengthen epidemiological intelligence and identify infodemic risks at all administrative levels.
- Intersectoral cooperation for the timely detection of health emergencies.
- Increase technological and information technology capacities to face emergencies and infodemic risks.