



LETTERS

CORONAVIRUS COVERAGE

Covid-19: a digital epidemic

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The covid-19 epidemic is not only viral—it is also digital.¹

Information spread through social and traditional media, as well as through governmental or health agencies, has reached a huge scale, certainly unprecedented in human history. The death count is followed closely as it rises—at least for the moment. Images and stories of quarantine are everywhere. As a result, the health risk of this epidemic is framed as scary and uncontrollable, which contributes to an epidemic of fear. Too much information, not balanced or filtered, is harmful and blurs sound health related decisions.²

Measures taken to prevent the spread have opportunity costs; they have a huge impact on trade and can have important

economic costs. The spread of infectious disease is considered a “top global economic risk.”³ Digital spread could increase this risk.

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- 2 Gigerenzer G. *Risk savvy: how to make good decisions*. Penguin, 2015.
- 3 Candeais V, Morhard R. The human costs of epidemics are going down but the economic costs are going up. Here's why. World Economic Forum 2018; <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2018/05/how-epidemics-infect-the-global-economy-and-what-to-do-about-it/>

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