

How Social Media Influences Health Topics Including Attitudes of New Mothers toward Vaccines and can Potentially Provide Educational Material to Help Dispel Misinformation about Vaccines

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BACKGROUND

- Seven out of every 10 Americans use social media, and between 2-3 billion people worldwide use social media
- Social media can spread misinformation, but can also be a tool to spread awareness about public health issues since it is very accessible
- Common health topics targeted by social media campaigns include sexually transmitted disease prevention, smoking cessation, and exercise
- A gap exists in the research regarding the use of social media to spread accurate information about vaccinations
- It is becoming more common to question if children should be vaccinated on the recommended schedule or even at all
- Many countries have seen a decrease in vaccination coverage recently highlighting the need for more research

SPECIFIC AIMS



METHODS

- A literature search was conducted using the electronic databases PubMed and American Academy of Pediatrics
- Included 31 articles written between 2011-2020, with the majority of articles having been written within the last three years
- Key search terms: vaccines, vaccine hesitancy, health knowledge, attitudes, practice, treatment refusal, patient acceptance of healthcare, parents, information seeking behavior, social media, and internet

RESULTS

Figure 1. One study looked at WHO/UNICEF data about reasons for vaccine hesitancy from 194 countries and overall the number one reason for hesitancy was fear of side effects, followed by lack of knowledge, and contextual influences. These results are consistent with other studies used in the literature review.

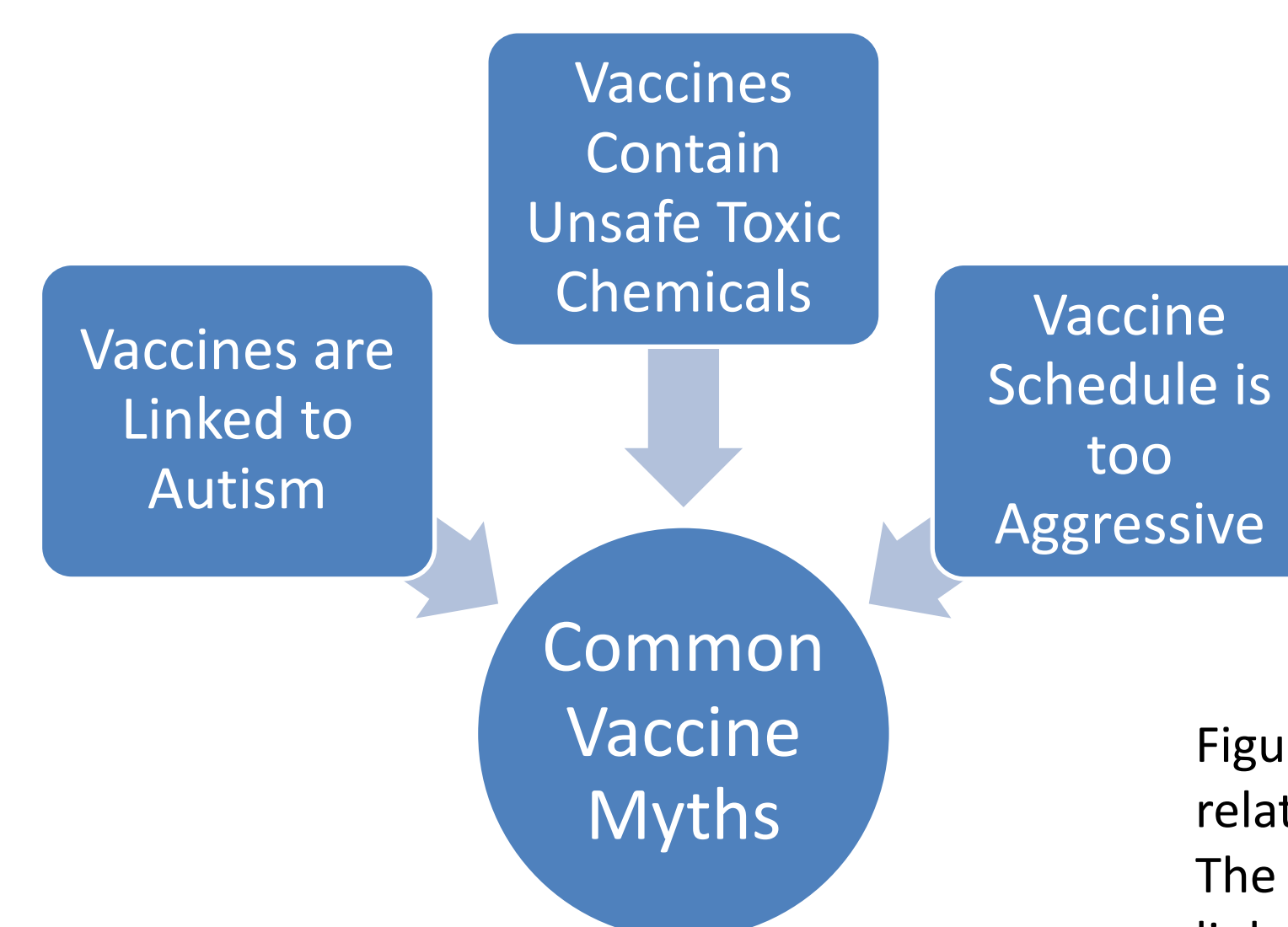
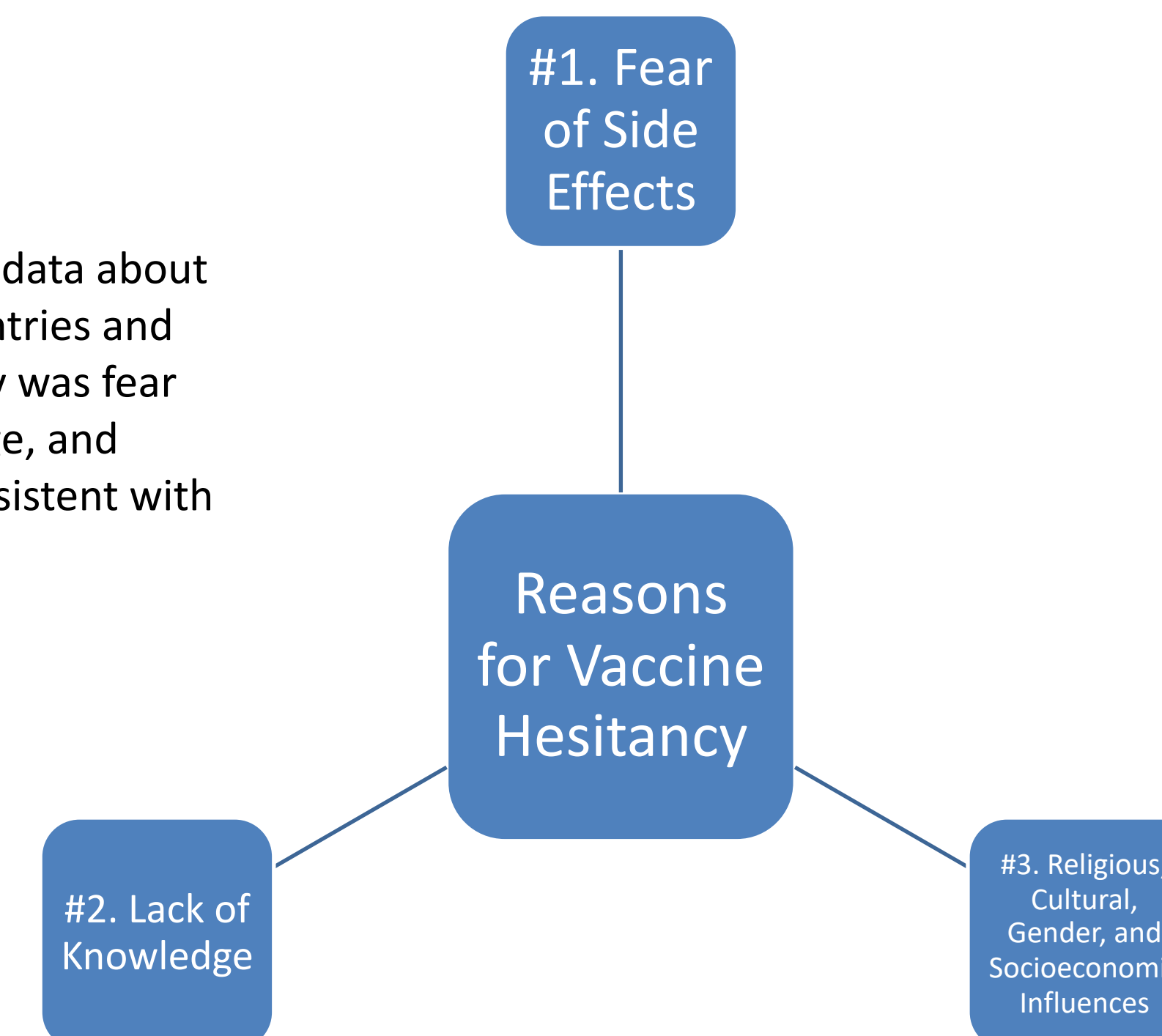


Figure 2. Themes emerged among the literature relating to the top vaccine myths that parents believe. The most common myths were that vaccines are linked to autism, vaccines contain unsafe toxic chemicals, and the vaccine schedule is too aggressive meaning that too many vaccines are given too soon in a child's life.

Sources of Information

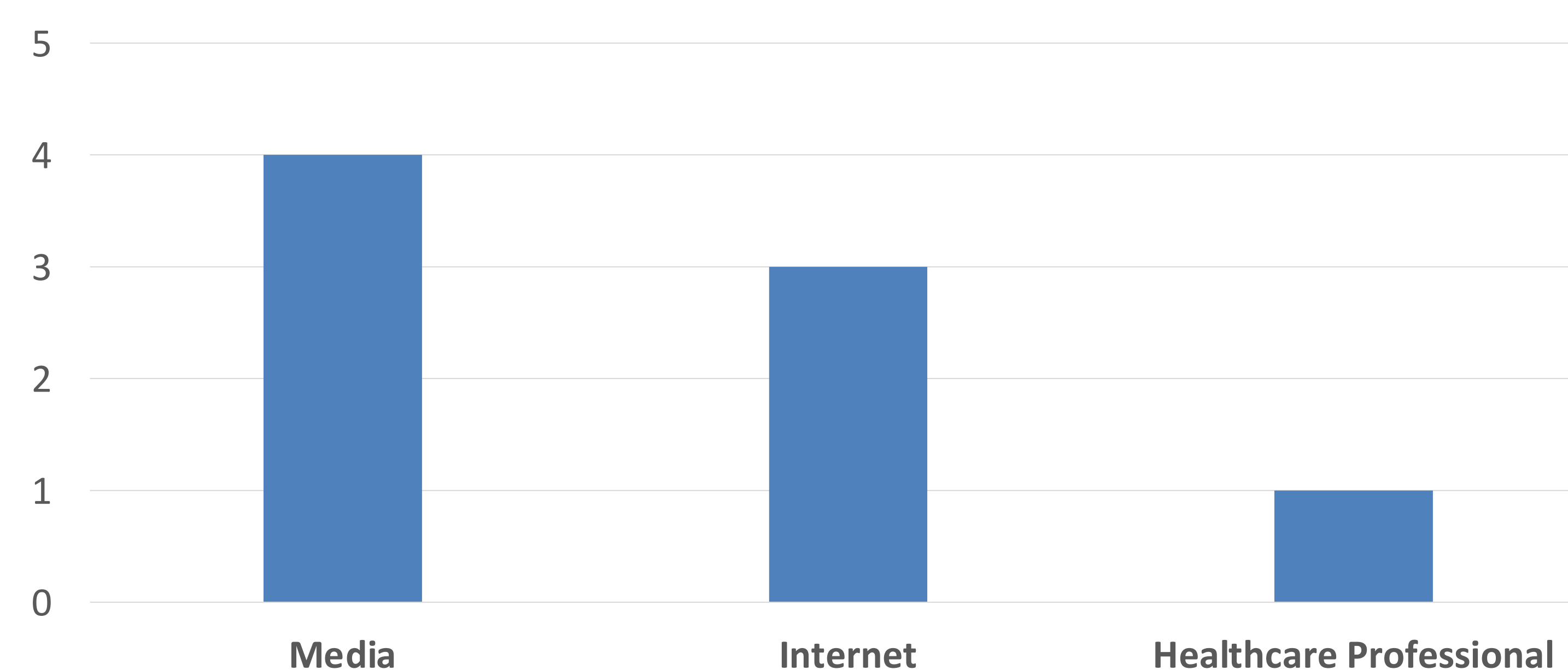


Figure 3. Out of 8 papers that looked at what people use as their main source of information about vaccines, 4 stated the media, 3 stated the internet, and only 1 stated healthcare professionals as their most accessed source for information on vaccines.

CONCLUSIONS

- Only one study investigated the influence of social media on parental vaccine behaviors and showed it can have a positive effect
- The internet and media are top sources parents use to find information about vaccines
- The literature relating to public health initiatives such as sexually transmitted disease prevention, smoking cessation, and exercise have shown that the use of social media may actually cause behavioral changes leading to health intervention
- Based off these findings it is plausible that social media could be used as a tool to correct misinformation about vaccines and address vaccine hesitancy in new and expectant mothers

NEXT STEPS

- Develop and disseminate an online, point in time survey to a globally representative population of new and expectant mothers
- Assess current attitudes of new mothers toward childhood vaccine safety and efficacy
- Assess where new and expectant mothers obtain trusted information about childhood vaccines

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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