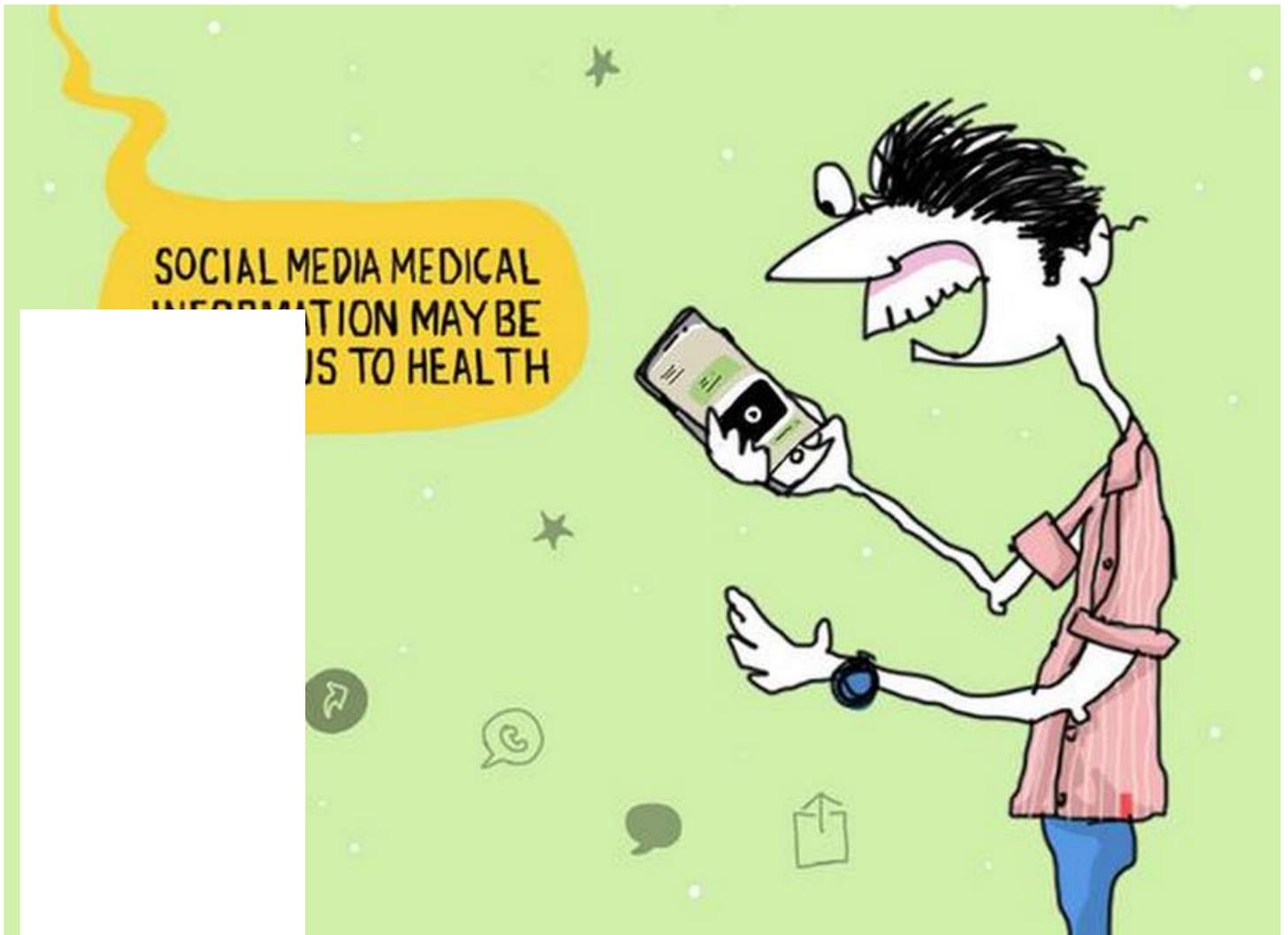


OPEN PAGE

The faked world out there



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s a new problem. It comes in the shape of half-truths spread over

school, your little angel cries incessantly, refusing to go, despite the
orm and the school bag; by the end of the week she starts making
:2 she learns the first 'swear' word.

She spells it out loudly, not to embarrass you, but confirming her innocence and lack of
knowledge about the intended audience who would enjoy it.

Sharing unusual, abnormal, attractive stuff is human instinct. And that's where the
problem starts.

As a doctor I had never come across a mom who says that her kid eats well, a wife who says that her husband listens to her advice, and non-resident software professional who thinks that his parents are not stubborn.

I have no answer as to why a kid should not enjoy drinking tasteless milk or bland vegetables, or a husband asking for an extra cup of coffee despite detected to have a borderline blood pressure or why a 70-year-old lady would refuse to go and settle down in the land of 'gun-and-honey' especially when a wheelchair transfer is arranged; but I had to stammer and answer these questions all along my career.

But there is change in the air. In the last one decade of my cardiology practice I find change in the pattern of questions that patients ask, not because of a happier mom, a contented wife or a satisfied son, but because of a bright luminous LCD screen taking over all our lives, the cellphone. The ultimate device to find and share unusual, attractive but senseless stuff.

The game in the phone makes the kid eat even the blandest diet, while the mom is scrolling the Facebook looking for likes and the father texting his friends. The NRI son can make a videocall any time and see the imported walking stick is in use. But that's not the issue here.

The doctor now has a new problem, and that needs to be underscored. It is a major problem, similar to one faced by President Trump. You're right, it is fake news.

Dr. John W. Krooner, MD, Mayo Clinic, has said cholesterol is no longer a problem. Dr. Baxter K. Rosenbaum published his research finding that blood pressure pills are responsible for many deaths in Canada. A miniature device the size of a matchbox, can now purify blood avoiding the need for dialysis is going to be available in New Zealand. Researchers at the institute of health science at Baltimore found that use of refined flour, called *maida*, in Indian food preparations is the real reason for majority of cancer cases in India.

All these news items came to my social media feed (WhatsApp) today, forwarded by my patients, asking me for my opinion. I am on the editorial board of half-a-dozen international medical journals, but have never come across such news.

To most Indians, a western name, attached to a high-sounding institute, impress them so much that they fail to confirm their veracity. All of these are fake medical news; the doctor names, their institute credentials, the information – all fake.

Even if they are untrue, sharing them is fun, right? Actually, Wrong.

Reports that a new technique can easily avoid bypass, or taking medicines for an illness like hypertension or diabetes might damage kidneys, is more damaging to an individual than a

political rhetoric. For the sharer, it is fun, but for the person waiting for a bypass surgery tomorrow, such a news may confuse him to take a wrong and costly decision.

Why not put a statutory warning: 'social media medical information may be injurious to health', I asked a friend, a software professional. 'Yes, good idea; we call it 'clickbait'. He smiled. 'Actually such notifications, on the contrary, attract more visitors and more hits,' he added. So I give up.

Let's wait and see how the President handles fake news.

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Woman kills husband, chops body, buries parts in different places

Crime committed on Feb 11; used to beat me often: accused

The Hindu