

Just tell us the truth

by SAM ODROWSKI

What are we to do when people in high positions of authority use demonstrably false facts and spread misinformation?

There's no real legal recourse when Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health (CMOH) blatantly misleads the public about something that can easily be found by searching the Province's own data.

Last Thursday (Nov. 25), Dr. Kieran Moore said hospitalizations in the 5-11 age group are increasing and the best way to reduce these numbers is through immunization.

From Nov. 10 to Nov. 29 (as of press time) there have been 0 hospitalizations in the 5-11 group.

What he said is patently false.

When public officials, such as Kieran Moore, purposefully mislead Ontarians or are illiterate to their own department's statistics, it erodes trust.

With that eroded trust, can we really blame people for going against their advice?

It pushes parents to seek alternative sources of information with respect to COVID-19 when the government's own data paints a different picture than the one being portrayed by the CMOH.

Using incorrect facts to pressure parents to vaccinate their 5-11-year-olds, isn't ethical or fair.

The National Advisory Committee on Immunization's own recommendation for the 5-11 group being vaccinated for COVID-19 was discretionary, meaning the decision should be made considering individual benefits, risks, or local epidemiology.

Looking at the Government of Canada's COVID-19 epidemiology statistics, it shows 19 people age 0-19 have died of COVID-19. This is about a rate of about 1 in 300,000. They also account for just 1.4 per cent of ICU admissions and 2.1 per cent of hospitalizations. Again, this is 0-19, not just 5-11, so those numbers are even smaller.

Yet, Public Health officials pushing irrational fear onto the public is nothing new.

The example provided isn't the first-time employees of Public Health have misled Ontarians.

Toronto's Medical Officer of Health (MOH) tweeted out at 3:19 p.m. on March 29, 2021 that "Data shows" a worsening COVID-19 resurgence in Toronto including increasing hospital and ICU admissions among younger people. Just 1.5 hours later, she promptly deleted the tweet, before tweeting out the same thing, but changing the wording to say "we're hearing" instead of "data shows".

The reason for the change is because what she said wasn't true.

In fact, for ICU admissions and hospitalizations, there were zero for people age 19 and under at the time of her tweet. The average age of ICU admission had no material change for days after as well, remaining at 64.

Meanwhile, Ottawa's Medical Officer of Health (MOH) Dr. Vera Etches issued a dire warning saying the entire health-care system is on the verge of collapse if people don't take responsibility to slow the spread of COVID-19 last October.

In a city of 1 million people, there were 29 people in hospital at the time of her comments. Hospitalizations later peaked in April at 125, with the system never even coming close to being overrun.

How is spreading wide spread fear productive?

In fact, I think it's the very reason why some people hold such fringe beliefs with respect to the pandemic.

If Public Health really wants to increase trust with Ontarians, don't obfuscate the truth.

I hope that we see some honesty from the government with respect to the new Omicron variant of COVID-19.

Like any coronavirus, or virus in general, it's going to mutate. This doesn't mean we should spread mass panic and implement more restrictions, further destroying small to medium size businesses.

In February of this year, British Minister of Vaccine Deployment Nadhim Zahawi said there are over 4,000 variants of the virus that causes COVID-19 around the world. This virus isn't going to stop mutating anytime soon.

We need to learn to live with COVID, it's a virus which has an incredibly low mortality rate for the vast majority of Canadians.

The average age of death from COVID-19 in Canada in 2020 is 83.8 years, meanwhile the average age of death in Canada in 2019 was 76.5 years old, according to the Public Health Agency of Canada. This means the virus primarily impacts people who are over the expected Canadian lifespan.

You likely wouldn't know this if you never took a look at the numbers yourself.

While we should be able to rely on those in positions of high authority at Public Health, such as the CMOH, to tell us the truth, I'm going to continue to weigh the data against his comments. Until trust can be restored, I'd suggest everybody do the same.