

# Opportunities and challenges of social media in outbreaks: A concern for COVID-19

[A Abdoli](#)<sup>1</sup>, [S.M. Heidarnejadi](#)<sup>2</sup>

Nowadays, dissemination of information is much faster than previous decades with development of Internet and different social media platforms. This development may have several advantages and disadvantages for prevention and control of contagious diseases, such as the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus (MERS-CoV), and avian influenza A (H7N9). Typically, outbreak of contagious disease has a huge impact on the social behaviors of populations in different communities, and consequently, this behavior alteration can either improve or interrupt the procedures of diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of these diseases <sup>[1]</sup>. According to a recent systematic review, the most popular social media platforms for circulation of information about the emerging infectious diseases (EID) were Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube <sup>[2]</sup>. Analysis of social media during the outbreaks of MERS-CoV and the H7N9 influenza in China have shown the usefulness of these platforms for measurement of the level of public awareness <sup>[3]</sup>. Another research regarding the Zika virus outbreak has demonstrated that social media can be used as a complementary way for forecasting the disease incidence and assessment of the dynamics of the outbreak <sup>[4]</sup>. The World Health Organization (WHO) has recently reported 12 myths about the COVID-19 pandemic <sup>[5]</sup> that swiftly disseminated in the websites and social media platforms. Hence, the Internet and social media platforms can be used as a helpful tool for dissemination of information during outbreaks by health authorities <sup>[1], [6]</sup>.