As the coronavirus spreads, misinformation is spreading even faster

It's no coincidence that internet phenomena share a vocabulary with certain diseases. As fast as a viral *pathogen* can spread in a world connected by air travel, bad information can move even faster.

pathogen　病原体；病菌　　　　　　　　debunk　揭穿；暴露

Half of the top 10 most shared English-language links about coronavirus on Facebook from the month of January were hyperbolic, *fear-mongering* and at times *blatantly* misleading articles from actual news outlets, according to a review of data from CrowdTangle.

fear-mongering　制造恐慌　　　　　　blatantly　公然地；喧闹地

Among the blatantly misleading is an article by the Daily Mail suggesting that the coronavirus outbreak was caused by Chinese people eating "bat soup" that was shared more than 96, 000 times on Facebook.

The "bat soup" *canard* is a classic example of disinformation — and a *potent* one. Like much of the most persuasive disinformation, the story involves elements of truth taken out of context and repackaged in a way that seems true because it affirms a particular worldview.

canard　谣言；谬传　　　　　　　　potent　有效的；有说服力的

In this case, actual footage of a Chinese woman eating a bat in soup was *ripped out* of its actual context and *spuriously* linked to the fact that some coronaviruses originate from bats, in order to create a narrative that appealed to a western audience's racist fascination with Chinese appetites.

rip out　扯掉　　　　　　　　　　spuriously　伪造地；虚假地

Unsurprisingly, articles *debunking* the story have not traveled nearly as far on social media as the original versions did, according to CrowdTangle data. And while the damage that this story did will likely never be measured, it will undoubtedly be felt by people of Asian descent around the world, whether they are kids being picked on at lunchtime or adults treated with disrespect while doing their jobs. The viral infection won't kill us, but it will weaken us.