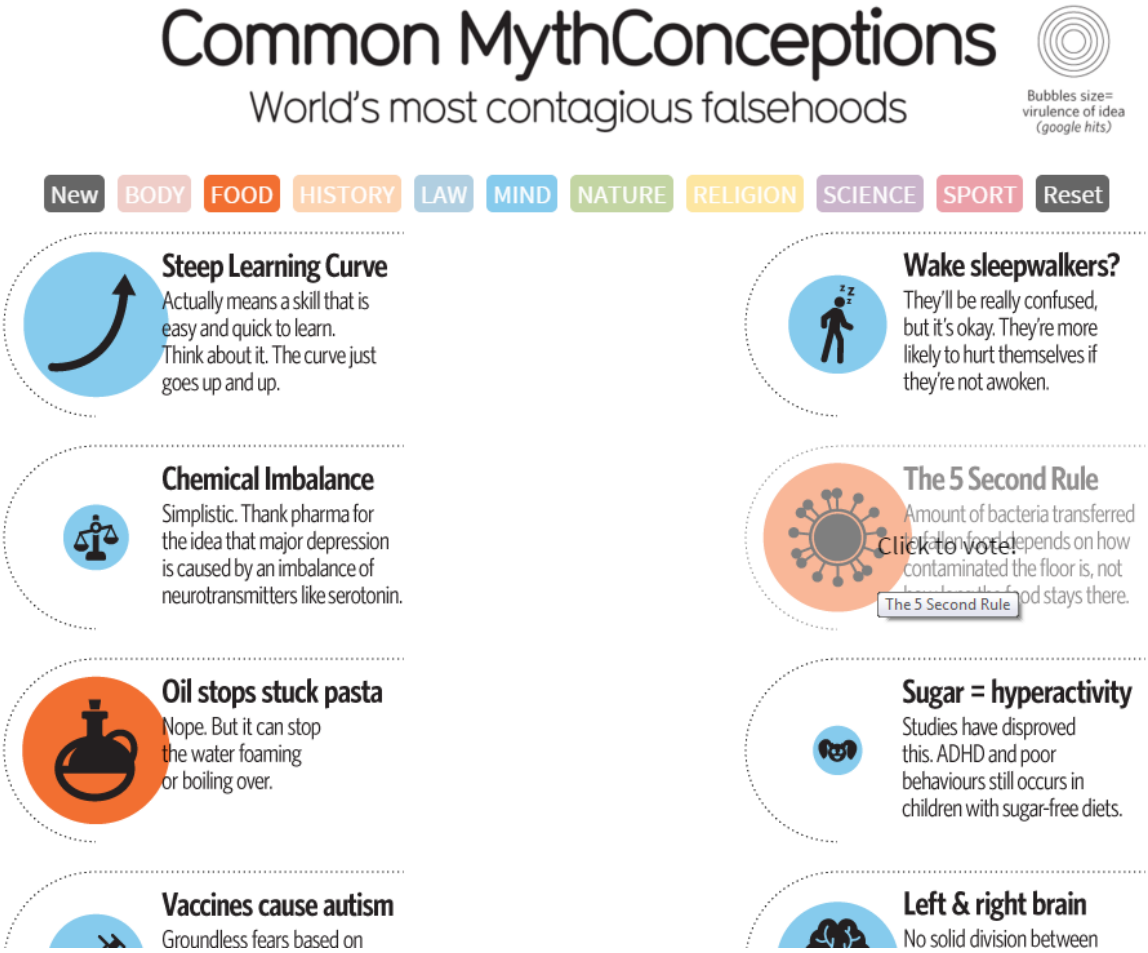
Pim van Alphen, 11082887



Common MythConceptions | Information is beautiful
http://www.informationisbeautiful.net/visualizations/common-mythconceptions/

2. Size: The size of the circles is an aspect of the visualisation which is readily seen as it stands out, especially when circles of different sizes are next to each other. This feature is even more striking because the symbols are adjusted in size as well. The problem with size as a quantitative measure, as described by Carpendale following Bertin´s visual variables, can be found in this visualisation. A slight quantitative meaning can be given to size only when one has noticed the legend on the top right of the chart. While the sizes seem to represent a certain value, it isn't exactly clear how this value and the size are correlated. The sizes only give us information about the relative values (i.e. the bigger circles represent more virulent ideas and the lesser circles represent less virulent ideas).

Color: The color in this visualisation adds to the associativity of the circles with each other and their corresponding category. The color doesn't provide us with any actual information other than association, as the categories can't be derived just from looking at the color of their topics* without looking at the categories themselves, and they don't represent any other kind of data. Their sole purpose seems to be to function as link between topics and categories (and with that, to distinguish them from other categories)

* Note that I interchangeably call misconceptions ideas, topics, problems or questions.

3. The domain of this visualisation seems to be the general knowledge, but it is accessed through Google, so its specified to what questions are looked up, instead of to an anthropologic view on Folk Knowledge. The authors asks for any missed myths, so the data can growth according to the new topics in the responses, so a continues validation by the people who read the visualisation is guaranteed. Even so, the data is gathered from googles search results, which means that it is created by the same population for which the visualisation is designed. Downstream validation of the correct implementation of the visualisation is difficult to achieve, but could consist of following the trends on googles search results, a lesser increase of the questions - dealt with in the visualisation - in googles data could imply the misconceptions being less virulent, which in turn could imply a higher number of views for the visualisation. The data/operation abstraction design can be validated by the viewers of the visualisation, although, in contrast to the continuously delivered suggestions for data, the author doesn't asks the viewers for their opinions. My opinion on the interaction design is that it works, the misconceptions are easy to understand and they are short. Because of this, they are easier to remember, especially the ones which struck me the most. This is partly due to the data, but the short and simple design goes well with the nature of this data.

4. I think this visualisation doesn't lend itself very well for an analyses of general good practices in visualizing data, especially because most of the elementary perceptual tasks, as described by Cleveland and McGill, are absent. Only area and color saturation are present in this visualisation, and their role has been described in question 2.

5. I don't believe a visualisation is functional art. I think that art can never be functional in itself. I can imagine things which are functional and artistic, but I would see those things as just being functional with an added coat of art. It's never the art which creates the function, it's the functional thing that is functional and to which art is added to create functional art. According to this, visualisation is not functional art. The whole purpose of a visualisation is to give people insights in data, which they couldn't perceive, or could less easy perceive, with only the raw data. A visualisation, when viewed in this manner, is nothing else than a tool, and a tool wouldn't be a tool if it wasn't functional. So the visualisation itself is functional, and can therefore never be art. Of course there exist visualisations which are more like art than others, but art is never the starting point of any visualisation, the art is always added.

6. The obvious task this visualisation is helping you with is the gathering of new knowledge or the adjusting of already existing knowledge. The visualisation has succeeded in fulfilling this task (it would be pretty bad if it wouldn't, considering the nature of the visualisation and its problem). A second task is that of comparison, we can use the visualisation to compare the virulence (as it's called, but not explained, in the visualisation) of different misconceptions, thereby giving us a sense of which questions are most present in the general population (probably the first world/western population, because they would use google the most (although misconceptions particular common to certain non-western countries are present too)). Following Cairo´s example, the last task the visualisation can achieve is a sense of ordering of the misconceptions. The visualisation is not great at ordering the problems for you. They can be grouped together in categories, but no option is given to rearrange the problems according to size, leaving you wondering which misconceptions are most prevalent.