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Speaker1: Holiday homework : my new normality as an infodemic manager, as COVID is not yet over.

I'm a "medical doctor & mother of five, opinions are my own" but this Twitter profile has nothing to do with my new normality. Currently, I'm on holidays in France and I wish to tell you how and why, even if the pandemic is not yet over.

In 2020, on the 22nd of January, I was at my office listening distractedly to the radio when the speaker announced that United States has just shut its border because they have identified their first coronavirus case.

The next day, my team has an emergency meeting. Regularly in the past our Department, the Ministry of Health, had faced to the risk of deadliest epidemics such as Ebola or cholera. So I was not at all stressed. It was our job. In the two next weeks we have a response plan and developed some information tools. We also have a training - a pilot training - for healthcare workers.

But the disease was new. So, from that time I tried to stay updated in the order to be able to answer every question about COVID and next to contradict erroneous information on social media too.

I had put my finger in a gear. It was such an addictive activity. I adopted a new routine and let myself be locked up in unreasonable hours. Little by little, my email inbox was overwhelmed by new information about COVID-19, and so was I. Suddenly, I need to open it twice a day in order to sort advices of partners, webinars information, scientific references, daily press digest, and so on. More than 50 emails every two or three days.

I get up about six o'clock in the morning, I read them and go to work. And I was rarely in bed before eleven in the evening. Every day, no weekend. I make me available to answer the questions of my colleagues of my network. The more I respond to requests, the more people ask me another informal and 'chronophage' activity. I am now more

interested in social listening and interpersonal communication than in hunting down exotic and viral fakes. But let's not anticipate.

On the 12th of March, I and my boss were in Douala, Cameroon for an important regional meeting. In the morning, our Minister of Health and his colleagues adopt the regional plan against COVID 19 for Central African Member States.

Late in the evening I was so tired, asleep in my bed, but the story is not over. KO KO KO KO KO KO. Someone knock at the door. It was not a dream. It was my boss. "Doctor", she said, "there's COVID in Gabon. We have just announced our first case. We have to go back home as soon as possible, even if we need to pay for it". And maybe, she thought "before the borders were shut". After returning to Libreville, I integrated the National Risk Communication and Community Engagement subcommission team, the RCCE.

Speaker1: It was such an interesting job, but I was not at all prepared for it, nor what would happen in the following weeks. Contrary to what I had imagined, at the start, the system in place, since the Ebola epidemic in West Africa 2014, had not been able to prevent the passage of the first coronavirus case, imported from France. Other cases followed in the community and a number of deaths, including among healthcare workers of our knowledge. The borders were shut. Libreville was confined. Masks became mandatory, etc..

Fortunately, in October 2020, new cases decreased. One single case remained hospitalized. No more deaths, no more fakes. Some public health measures were lifted. The epidemic seemed so close to its end.

2021

January. New Year. New cases, new deaths. New wave, new figures. Vaccination against COVID was planned and I was associated to the activity. Unfortunately, my personal computer broke down while misinformation become more aggressive, more subtle, and it was harder for me to deal with it.

In May, I lost my android. Everything could have ended there for me, but I decided to replace both those tools. Tell me today, who among you can live or work without a personal laptop or mobile phone? I couldn't.

In June, I attend the W.H.O. online training for the second cohort of Infodemic managers on a virtual island, Elnor. Not really holidays, but in the end it was relaxing. Lots of knowledge and above all, the opportunity of developing new attitudes and practices in a working group. From the first session, we were told that Infodemic is not just about misinformation and fake news, but also about good information and facts.

For me it was like a revelation: *Truth had exhausted me*. Too many sources, too many articles, too many hours behind a computer. Unnecessary controversies with people who cannot be convinced.

Speaker1:

In July 2022, the fourth wave was almost ended. More than 40,000 cases notified. More than 300 deaths. The epidemic was not over yet, but I need to have some rest. Three years without holidays, three years without seeing my kids.

During those three years, I accumulated so many files and references, a whole collection of fake news: *Autant en emporte le vent (Ed. Gone with the wind)*. I was so tired I had to decide to take a vacation abroad. I couldn't travel without a computer or phone, but I spent an entire month without watching the TV. And without writing a single tweet. Amazing for those who know me in the response.

Okay, I couldn't stop to sort my emails and to attend a few zooms, particularly of storytelling workshop on infodemic. As a public health doctor, maybe this will be my new normality for holidays.

Currently I'm rested and you know, I'm happy and ready to return to work in a few days. Of course, the current pandemic is not yet over, even if *the end is in sight*. But don't worry for me. My vacation are not over neither. This full month was just the first wave and I still have two months left in the pipe. My story sounds like yours or some of your colleagues ones? Consider taking care of yourself too. Thank you.