

**Comment from Professor Julie Leask, University of Sydney:**

There are a few reasons why it is better to not air these stories in this way. First of all, the COVID-19 vaccine cannot 'shed' the virus to others. The unvaccinated are more likely to pass SARS-CoV-2 to others than the vaccinated. Second, it gives this false claim much more airtime than a single Instagram post might. The news value here appears to be in getting attention, outrage, and clicks rather than serving audiences. It's a pivotal time for COVID-19 vaccines, as people form their beliefs, which will tend to solidify over time. So responsible reporting is more important than ever.

These kinds of stories tend to polarize communities and give such people higher follower counts – which some of them relish. But for others it brings them the full force of public shame to a degree they didn't anticipate, which has its own problems.

To deal with misinformation that is gaining traction, it can be useful to mentally prepare audiences by giving them small doses of the opposing view in a supportive environment so they're ready for it when they encounter it 'in the wild'. This is called psychological inoculation or pre-bunking. This false claim appears to be gaining traction so it's probably worth doing. But the best way to do that is via Fact-checkers and interviewing relevant experts.