

Press release of the French Academy of Sciences, National Academy of Medicine, National Academy of Pharmacy and Academy of Technologies

A "Hold up" on science

For several days now, a long film entitled "Hold up" has been circulating on social networks, which, by giving itself the appearance of a documentary, develops a conspiracy theory on the Covid-19 pandemic. This film evokes in turn a series of often confused and sometimes contradictory opinions. They seek both to minimize the seriousness of the pandemic - let us recall that 45,000 French people died in 10 months - and to support the idea that the health authorities want to impose the setting up of a system of surveillance and coercion on the population.

For example, this film denounced the uselessness of containment, announced the end of the epidemic last spring (!), or told that Sweden escaped the epidemic without being confined, all information unfounded and contradicted by the facts. Even stronger, the film explains that the virus was deliberately manufactured in a laboratory of the Pasteur Institute. The artificial manufacture of Covid-19 is not a new theory. However, there is no evidence, including the study of the virus sequence, that it is not the result of the evolution of a coronavirus in nature from an animal reservoir. The film claims that in Canada, patients are locked up in internment camps, that the use of Rivotril[®] has been deliberately promoted in France to kill elderly people with Covid-19, while the use of the drug presented as a life-saving agent, hydroxychloroquine, is banned, even though its ineffectiveness has been amply demonstrated by a series of scientific articles with impeccable methodology. Finally, the film culminates in the evocation of a global conspiracy that seeks to establish a governance by the "elite" of an enslaved humanity for the benefit of the multinational big business.

This junk of nonsense could make one smile, especially since its authors have no other legitimacy than their experience of spreading false information that fuels a climate of fear and mistrust towards the authorities in charge. Nevertheless, the fact that this film has been downloaded hundreds of thousands of times and is widely commented on social networks should be a warning. It testifies to the invasion of the media sphere by fake news and conspiracy theories. In this respect, the meticulous work of several teams of journalists (AFP, Le Monde, Libération, France info...), who demonstrate the inanity of most of the comments made in this film, must be greeted.

The French Academies of Science, Medicine, Pharmacy and Technology seriously warn, in the strongest terms, our fellow citizens against the falsity of the information thus propagated. Their

dissemination within our society, particularly among the youngest, is likely to compromise the rational basis of the public health actions necessary for the control of the current pandemic, whether it be measures of distancing, containment, tracing of contact cases or the expected close implementation of the vaccination.

Beyond health, attacks on science affect today many aspects of the life of our societies. These attacks call scientists, educators, media professionals and citizens to the utmost vigilance. We must continue to seek appropriate answers from all sides and to work towards education and transparency on the rapidly evolving state of scientific and technological knowledge.

Our Academies are resolutely committed to this.