# Vatican’s twice-daily briefings on Pope Francis set new standard for combating misinformation



The Vatican has implemented a strategy of transparency through twice-daily medical briefings during Pope Francis’ hospitalisation for pneumonia, aiming to combat potential misinformation regarding his health. As the Pope faced serious health issues, his medical team conducted press conferences to disseminate official updates, a move that reflects a concerted effort by the Holy See to address and counteract false narratives that can arise in the public sphere.

According to a spokesperson from the Vatican, the decision to hold these briefings was not only to inform the public but also to “counter disinformation”. As mentioned in reports by The Independent, the rise of conspiracy theories surrounding prominent figures has prompted a need for proactive communication. The Vatican's approach is being increasingly seen as a blueprint for how institutions might address the issue of misinformation.

Benjamin Shultz, a researcher from The American Sunlight Project, noted that the strategy of “prebunking” was employed effectively in this context. Prebunking involves providing accurate information to prevent the spread of falsehoods before they can gain traction. Shultz articulated the effectiveness of this method, stating, “It disarms conspiracy theories before they emerge by closing the information gap. There is no room for speculation.” His observations indicated that the preventive measures employed by the Vatican resulted in minimal misinformation concerning the Pope's health.

The significance of this strategy becomes clearer when considering past incidents where the Vatican had to address miscommunication. In 2017, the Vatican was forced to deny claims regarding former Pope Benedict XVI’s health, exacerbated by a misquotation in circulation that vastly misrepresented the former pope's condition. This instance highlighted the potential damage that misinformation can cause, reinforcing the need for transparent communication, especially in times of crisis.

Pope Francis has previously acknowledged the threats posed by disinformation, particularly in the rise of artificial intelligence technologies that can generate deceptive content with increasing sophistication. In a message to the World Economic Forum in January, he expressed concern over the ability of AI to produce outputs that are almost indistinguishable from human work, emphasising the implications this holds for public discourse and truth.

As the Vatican navigates this era marked by rapid information dissemination and potential misinformation, the effectiveness of its communication strategy during Pope Francis’ hospitalisation raises key questions. The experience suggests that increased transparency might serve as a robust defence mechanism against the prevalence of false narratives in a digital age, potentially altering how institutions engage with the public regarding sensitive matters.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/with-pope-hospital-vatican-breaks-century-old-taboos-discuss-his-health-2025-02-25/> - This article discusses the Vatican's unprecedented transparency in providing daily health updates on Pope Francis during his hospitalization for double pneumonia, aiming to counter misinformation.
* <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/doctor-reveals-just-how-close-pope-francis-came-dying-2025-03-25/> - This report details the severe health crisis Pope Francis faced during his hospitalization, including critical respiratory issues and the medical team's decision to continue aggressive treatment.
* <https://apnews.com/article/7fa0d692e3ba1a94ca936101a28dbe26> - This article highlights Pope Francis' significant improvement after his hospitalization for double pneumonia, noting his recovery and ongoing therapies.
* <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/pope-francis-thanks-doctors-who-saved-his-life-meeting-vatican-2025-04-16/> - This piece covers Pope Francis' meeting with the medical team from Rome's Gemelli Hospital, where he expressed gratitude for their life-saving efforts during his hospitalization.
* <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/with-pope-hospital-vatican-breaks-century-old-taboos-discuss-his-health-2025-02-25/> - This article discusses the Vatican's unprecedented transparency in providing daily health updates on Pope Francis during his hospitalization for double pneumonia, aiming to counter misinformation.
* <https://apnews.com/article/cacf6c5cb7d5c09595973aeb8f51e44f> - This report details Pope Francis' return to the Vatican after a five-week hospitalization for life-threatening double pneumonia, highlighting his recovery and ongoing rest period.
* <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/pope-francis-illness-hospital-vatican-updates-misinformation-b2743090.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data