

## **ANIS and HIPRA bring together experts to analyze the impact of misinformation on COVID-19 prevention and vaccination**

The National Association of Health Information Professionals (ANIS), with the support of HIPRA, held the conference “COVID-19 prevention and vaccination: rebuilding trust in the face of misinformation” with the aim of providing journalists with an up-to-date analytical framework based on expert sources

The meeting addressed the epidemiological evolution of the virus, the current impact of the disease, and the challenges of health communication in the context of declining risk perception

**Madrid, June 1, 2026** – In a context marked by the long-term coexistence with SARS-CoV-2, experts warn that **COVID-19 continues to pose a significant risk to vulnerable populations** and that the declining public perception of risk is affecting both vaccination coverage and adherence to basic preventive measures. In Spain alone, during the 2024–2025 season, **COVID-19 was associated with approximately 8,000 hospitalizations, 300 ICU admissions, and around 500 deaths**, primarily among older adults and high-risk patients<sup>1</sup>.

Against this backdrop, the **National Association of Health Information Professionals (ANIS), with the support of HIPRA, held the conference “COVID-19 prevention and vaccination: rebuilding trust in the face of misinformation”**, moderated by **Graziella Almendral**, President of ANIS. The session brought together doctors **María Fernández-Prada**, specialist in the Clinical Management Area of Preventive Medicine and Public Health at Hospital Vital Álvarez Buylla in Mieres, Asturias, and Secretary of the Spanish Vaccinology Association (AEV); **Iván Sanz**, Scientific Lead and Head of Virological Surveillance at the National Influenza Centre in Valladolid; and **Jorge del Diego**, Advisor to the Directorate-General for Public Health and Health Equity at the Spanish Ministry of Health, to discuss the **main current challenges surrounding COVID-19**.

During the conference, **Dr. María Fernández-Prada** warned that COVID-19 has become “overly normalized” and emphasized that, although the current situation differs significantly from the early years of the pandemic, the virus continues to have a substantial clinical impact on certain population groups. “COVID-19 should not be communicated using the same social alarm framework as in 2020, but neither should it be treated as a trivial infection,” Fernández-Prada stated.

Regarding the epidemiological behavior of COVID-19, **Dr. Iván Sanz** explained that SARS-CoV-2 has evolved toward a circulation pattern characterized by outbreaks occurring throughout the year, moving away from the large pandemic waves seen in the early stages of the pandemic. “Living with the virus has now become established,” he noted, while adding that uncertainty remains regarding its future circulation patterns. On vaccination, he stressed the importance of continuing to protect the population, particularly those at higher risk. “During the 2024–2025 season, 81% of hospitalizations occurred in people over 60 years of age, and 71% of deaths were among those over 80, with an overall case fatality rate of 6.1%.” In the same season, the

European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) estimated an average COVID-19 vaccination coverage of just 8.7% among people aged 60 and over, and 8.5% among those aged 80 and over across reporting countries, although coverage varied considerably between countries<sup>2</sup>.

From a public health perspective, **Dr. Jorge del Diego** emphasized the need to recognize COVID-19 as an ongoing reality: “Those who are not affected by it tend to consider the disease over once the pandemic has ended, but those who do suffer from it often feel abandoned, as clear care pathways are still lacking.”

### **The challenge of communicating rigorously about COVID-19 and vaccines**

Part of the discussion focused on the impact **that misinformation continues to have on public perceptions of COVID-19 and vaccines**, as well as the challenge of addressing it in a context shaped by pandemic fatigue and a declining perception of risk.

**Dr. Iván Sanz** noted that one of the most common mistakes in health communication is “failing to understand the concerns and needs of the people receiving those vaccines,” which creates “a certain disconnect between the messenger and the audience.” For her part, **Dr. María Fernández-Prada** stressed the importance of avoiding both alarmism and trivialization in media coverage of COVID-19 and vaccination. Meanwhile, **Dr. Jorge del Diego** warned that misinformation “erodes trust, which is what sustains vaccination coverage; and where vaccination coverage declines, diseases we believed were under control re-emerge.”

Through initiatives such as this, ANIS and HIPRA reaffirm their **commitment to promoting rigorous, evidence-based health information**, fostering collaboration among experts, institutions, and journalists to support more contextualized communication that is aligned with today’s public health challenges.

### **About HIPRA**

HIPRA is a biotechnological pharmaceutical company focused on prevention in animal and human health (One Health), with a wide range of highly innovative vaccines and an advanced diagnostic service. With its claim “**Building immunity for a healthier world**”, HIPRA reaffirms its commitment to contributing solutions that improve global health.

The company has a strong international presence with **40 subsidiaries, 3 R&D centers and 6 production facilities** strategically located in Europe (Spain) and the Americas (Brazil). In addition, its extensive international distribution network keeps commercial channels open in nearly 100 additional countries, thus covering all five continents.

Research and development are at the core of its expertise. HIPRA **invests around the 15% of its annual revenue to R&D** activities, focused on the creation and application of the latest scientific advances for the development of innovative vaccines of the highest quality. HIPRA has a portfolio of vaccines based on different technological platforms, with R&D teams working with a broad range of technologies and biological modalities.

To add further value to its expertise in vaccination, the company also develops medical devices and traceability services for animal health.

### Sobre la ANIS

The National Association of Health Information Professionals (ANIS) is Spain's leading association of **health journalists and health communication professionals**. It currently brings together around **700 members**, including specialized health journalists from across the country representing all media platforms—print, radio, television, and digital media—and working in both general and specialized outlets at national and local levels. The association also includes communications professionals from **healthcare services and centers, institutions, organizations, healthcare companies, and communications agencies**. In addition to journalists and communicators, ANIS counts healthcare professionals from across the sector among its members, including physicians, nurses, and pharmacists.

As a professional association, ANIS operates on a non-profit basis. Its main objectives are to defend the interests and rights of its members within their professional field, promote continuous professional development, and uphold ethical standards in journalism and communication. ANIS is **affiliated with the Federation of Journalists' Associations of Spain (FAPE)**.

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