[GB] News programme and live sermon include potential harmful claims about COVID-19

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On 18 May, Ofcom imposed a sanction on Loveworld Limited, which broadcasts a religious television channel called Loveworld, because a news programme and live sermon included potentially harmful claims about COVID-19.

Specifically, an item on the news programme included "unsubstantiated claims" that 5G was the cause of the pandemic; another suggested that hydroxychloroquine was a "cure" for the virus, with no mention made of the fact that this claim was clinically unproven or that the drug has potentially serious side effects. In addition, a sermon was broadcast on *Your LoveWorld* which included claims - unsubstantiated - about 5G, asserted that lockdown was not necessary, and cast doubt on official health advice as well as on possible vaccinations.

Ofcom stated that there was no general ban on broadcasting controversial views which differ from or challenge official authorities on public health information. However, it found that the unsubstantiated claims in both programmes had not been sufficiently put into context. Consequently, there was a risk of undermining audience trust in official health advice, with potentially severe consequences for public health.

Ofcom found that the potentially harmful content and inaccuracies in the news broadcasts and sermon (in breach of Rules 2.1 and 5.1 of the Broadcasting Code) meant that Loveworld Limited had not adequately protected its audience. These are described as serious failings. Ofcom ordered Loveworld to broadcast its findings and it is considering imposing a further sanction.

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https://www.ofcom.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0024/195621/Loveworld-Sanction.pdf

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