



The Body as Misinformation

Examining the role of bodily information
in the formation of false health beliefs

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Context

- information embodiment and misinformation both garnering increased LIS research attention separately (Huvila & Gorichanaz, 2025)
- overlap = underexplored

Trends in information behavior research, 2016–2022: An Annual Review of Information Science and Technology (ARIST) paper

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Abstract

Research on how people look for and interact with information has a long history in the information field. The current literature has been repeatedly reviewed in earlier volumes of *Annual Review of Information Science and Technology*. In this review, we offer an overview of the research published in this area in the years 2016–2022 with a focus on the trends that have emerged in this period. We use the term “information behavior” as an umbrella for the research area interested in how people become informed and engage with information in diverse manners acknowledging that different researchers and subfields prefer other terms and frameworks, including information practices, information experience, and health information seeking, to name a few. We reviewed 1270 articles in the field published in the years 2016–2022 and identified seven emerging trends: The COVID-19 Pandemic, Diversity and Inclusion, **Embodiment**, **Misinformation** and Trust, Social Q&A Websites, Collaboration, and Information Creation. The reviewed literature and trends are discussed in relation to their significance for information, earlier review of information behavior research, and the long-debated issue of theory-driven versus atheoretical research in the field.

Aims

- explore the body's possible role in the generation and substantiation of health misinformation
- attempt to develop the concept of "embodied health misinformation"

Method

- synthesis of literature from LIS and adjacent disciplines

Health Misinformation

False or misleading information about human health, where facticity is judged against current best available scientific evidence and/or consensus from health experts

Embodied Information

- Bates: “the corporeal expression or manifestation of information previously in encoded form” (2018, p. 242)
 - Can be enacted, expressed, or **experienced** *information*
- Aligned with Lloyd’s (2010) **corporeal information**: “information that is experienced through the situated and sensory body” (para. 2)

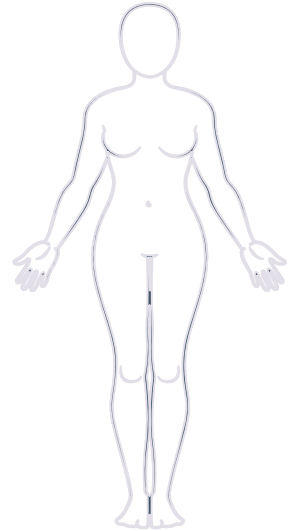
information about a person’s health status that they access through detecting and interpreting their own bodily sensations

Interoception

the process by which the nervous system uses bodily signals to provide “a moment-by-moment mapping of the internal landscape of the body” (Berntson & Khalsa, 2021).

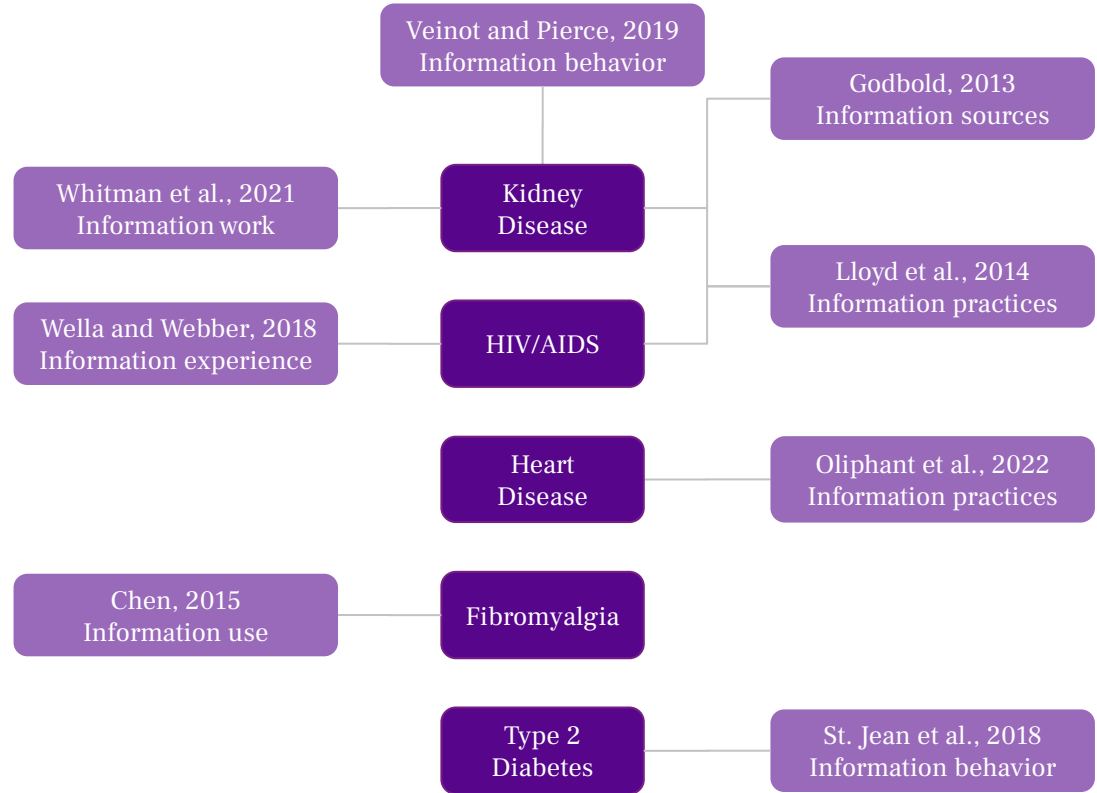
self-consciously tapping into these signals to glean information about the inner state of the body:

interoceptive awareness



Embodied Health Information in the LIS Literature

- Explore the information use, practices, behaviors, centered on the body as health information source
- Largely qualitative; participants with complex health status
- Significance of bodily information & information work



Interoception & Perception Gaps

- interoceptive awareness \neq interoceptive accuracy (Garfinkel et al., 2015)
- a range of factors affect ability to accurately sense and interpret bodily signals - e.g., body image, lifestyle, mental health (Zamariola et al., 2017; Pollatos et al., 2009; Mulder et al., 2024)
- gaps between what we sense and what we perceive (our interpretation of that sensation) - see Lueg, 2014

Cognitive Biases in Evaluating & Interpreting Bodily Information

- Confirmation bias
 - pre-existing beliefs can influence evaluation of information (e.g., Savolainen, 2022)
- Apophenia & illusions of causation
 - the tendency to find patterns and assume causality, even without a real link (Matute et al., 2015)
- Availability and fluency bias
 - viscerality and ease of processing (Van Boven, 2007; Marsh & Yang, 2021)

Embodied Health Misinformation

- incomplete, inaccurate, misleading embodied information about health → embodied health misinformation
- In the literature? Not much!
 - Some LIS studies report on inaccurate corporeal information (Godbold, 2013; Wella & Webber, 2018)
 - Limited but more substantial research in sociology, health communication/discourse studies (Topham & Smith, 2023, Versteeg et al., 2018)

One day of eating: Tracing misinformation in ‘What I Eat In A Day’ videos

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Embodied misinformation: feeling ‘light and airy’

“here it no longer matters whether detoxes, diets, and other patterns of eating are scientifically validated. What matters is how this knowledge is embodied and lived, and how it makes us feel”

(Topham & Smith, 2023, p. 692)

“Listen to your body”: Participants’ alternative to science in online health discussions

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LTyB used to formulate advice that is not underpinned by scientific sources

bodily listening is deployed to “transform personal health choices into advice that does not need to be supported by factual or scientific sources”

(Versteeg et al., 2018, p. 436)

Significance & Future Research

- Brings nuance to the way we talk about and study health misinformation
 - Shades of grey (Hameleers et al, 2023) and misinformation as epistemic conflict (Chinn et al., 2020)
- Source triangulation, need to contextualize corporeal experience with other information sources
- Ongoing and future research
 - Small qualitative study - nursing students' perspectives on body-as-information (Campbell Rice, 2025)
 - Source evaluation practices pertaining to embodied information

Questions? Thoughts?

now or later!



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