Risk Communication The Increasing Importance of Social Media
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The TELL ME Framework Model

The main objectives of the project are to develop a practical guide for outbreak communication. The approach that can be adapted to specific risk situations and serve as the foundation for a practical guide for public sphere activism, education and services. The objective of the model is to demonstrate the non-linear nature of outbreak communication and show that all stakeholders are cross-connected and able to influence situations. The project builds on all these lines and aims to create outbreak communication models that offer a multi-layered approach. Taking into consideration technological, cultural and social developments, the TELL ME Framework Model offers a new look on the inter-relationships between seven components of risk communication: public sphere, communication, mass media, social media, opinion leaders, government and agencies to cope with vaccine-resistant groups.

The significance of the Framework Model is that it integrates relevant concepts and theories with a practical approach that can be adapted to specific risk situations and serve as the foundation for a practical guide for outbreak communication. It presents a model that is based on existing evidence and provides a tool for practitioners to develop effective communication strategies. The European Commission funded, collaborative project seeks to address three research questions:

1. How can the general public be better motivated or positively influenced to take effective preventive measures during the outbreak?
2. Which are the most appropriate communication methods to deal with the complexity, uncertainty and misinformation and malicious information?
3. What are the best communication strategies to maximise vaccine uptake, and to assist health professionals to influence behaviours, reduce the spread of disease, avoid panic, build and maintain confidence in governmental responses during pandemics?

Communication of risk is a critical step towards influencing public perceptions and attitudes. Since the outbreak of the H1N1 or “swine flu” virus, communication has become a central issue for managing risk. Deeply entrenched beliefs and views that oppose recommendations made by official bodies pose a major problem during infection outbreaks. Opinion leaders, public sphere activism, education and services provide a new look on the inter-relationships between seven components of risk communication: public sphere, segmentation, mass media, social media, opinion leaders, government and agencies to cope with vaccine-resistant groups.

Our Background

To define models for improved risk and crisis communication during pandemics, European Commission funded, collaborative projects have systematically reviewed existing evidence to develop practical guidance on roles and procedures. Practical evidence has led to a new look on the inter-relationships between seven components of risk communication: public sphere, segmentation, mass media, social media, opinion leaders, government and agencies to cope with vaccine-resistant groups.
Tell me research and focus groups with HCPs across Europe and the US found that HCPs themselves felt social media should be used more widely to improve communications with the public. Many HCPs use social media to exchange clinical information, search for and discuss career opportunities and engage in discussions on the latest health news and research. HCPs can amplify and add credibility to public health messages on social media during a crisis.

- BMJ’s doc2doc has over 70,000 registered users
- The French Réseau Santé Social (RSS) has over 50,000 full members

However, throughout the literature, a lack of HCP participation in planning for a pandemic and developing seasonal flu vaccination campaigns is apparent. If social media is to be adopted as a serious crisis communications tool by HCPs, Institutions need to properly quantify and integrate the value of social media as a means to spread public health messages.

In addition to HCPs, there should be a wider use of opinion leaders at a local level to disseminate health messages. From the interviews we have conducted with bloggers, it was evident that they are thirsty for information and cooperation with governmental authorities.

How HCPs and Health Authorities Communicated

Tell me research and focus groups with HCPs across Europe and the US found that HCPs themselves feel social media should be used more widely.

Healthcare Professionals (HCPs) and Social Media

Harnessed Spokespeople

- Engage with opinion leaders
- Understand attitudes, issues & perceptions
- Build trust & confidence
- Recruit trusted spokespeople
- Dispel myths & rumour
- Address fears & concerns
- Mediate communications through trusted sources
- Evaluate response to communications
- Pre-test messages with focus group

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Social media communication during H1N1 2009

Case study 1: The H1N1 pandemic 2009

An essential part of strategic communications planning (WHO, 2011)

WHC declared that the use of new information technologies should be an essential part of strategic communications planning. ‘EMC 2010’ and ‘ECDC 2010’ both called for a strategy to disseminate emergency information. In the first minutes of information found on the internet was also increased. This shows the role of information as a mobilizing factor and the importance of a rapid and accurate disseminating of the information. The H1N1 outbreak was first noticed in a blogospheric and other rapid media.
Ten Golden Rules of Risk Communication

1. Presence before a crisis
2. An interactive two-way process
3. Comprehensive and flexible
4. Timing
5. Credibility, accountability, transparency and honesty
6. Proactive stance
7. Monitor social media and trending topics
8. Appealing to Health Care Professionals
9. Online communities as a resource
10. Information needs of various key stakeholders

How does Twitter deal with misinformation?

Case study 2: How does Twitter deal with misinformation?

As part of the TELL ME research, good practice and key principles for

MISINFORMATION ASSOCIATED NETWORKS DISCREDITORS

The original rumour: Rumour spread because dramatic news went viral and was not challenged immediately. As more people on Twitter found out about it, they began to cross-verify and check with official sources. Officially verified information was shared immediately. As more people on Twitter

For more information on the TELL ME project or to access the guidance documents and tools, please go to www.tellmeproject.eu