Communication Strategies and Vaccine Roll out

Dominique Brossard, Ph.D.
Professor and Chair, Department of Life Sciences Communication
University of Wisconsin-Madison

Morgridge Institute of Research

@brossardd

The COVID-19 Vaccine: What role can museums play in the rollout of the new vaccine? NISE Network, Feb 2 2021
Societal Experts Action Network (SEAN): Facilitating Rapid and Actionable Responses to Social, Behavioral, and Economic-Related COVID-19 Questions

In response to the current outbreak of COVID-19, decision-makers at all levels of government have critical and complex questions that are answerable based on evidence from the social, behavioral, and economic sciences (SBE). To connect SBE research with decision-makers who need rapid answers, the National Academies, with support from the National Science Foundation and the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, has established a network of leading individuals and institutions in SBE fields to provide actionable responses to urgent policy questions. The Societal Experts Action Network (SEAN) consists of experts available to develop evidence-based recommendations to support local, state, and national responses.
What impacts public attitudes toward vaccines?

- Religion
- Institutional Context
- Socio-Economic Context

- Information Climate

- Individual Level Characteristics
Even in Poorer Neighborhoods, the Wealthy Are Lining Up for Vaccines
The New York Times • 6 hours ago

COVID-19 Vaccine: Will It Protect Against New Variants And Do You Need A 2nd Dose?
NPR • 28 minutes ago
• If your loved one is hesitant to get the Covid-19 vaccine, share this
CNN • 2 hours ago

View Full Coverage

Russia's COVID-19 Vaccine Reported To Be 92% Effective: Coronavirus Updates
NPR • 47 minutes ago

Who's getting the Covid vaccination? Often, it's not those who might need it most.
COVID-19
Get the latest information from the CDC about COVID-19.

What The COVID Vaccine Does To Your Body
3M views • 1 month ago
AsapSCIENCE
Is the coronavirus vaccine safe? Now that the first COVID19 vaccine from Pfizer is being released, how do mRNA vaccines work?
CC

COVID 19 Vaccine Deep Dive: Safety, Immunity, RNA Production, w Shane Crotty, PhD (Pfizer / Moderna)
1M views • 1 month ago
MedCram - Medical Lectures Explained CLEARLY
Professor Shane Crotty, PhD answers a series of COVID 19 vaccine questions including what are the chances of long-term side ...
CC

How the newest vaccines fight Covid-19
42K views • 4 hours ago
Vox
The scientific leap behind two new kinds of vaccines. Subscribe and turn on notifications ( ) so you don't miss any videos: ...
Through headlines, visuals, metaphors, sources cited, media frames provide cues to audiences.
... and “media frames” do not operate in a vacuum

- Audiences process frames and information through their own perceptual filters, including:
  - religious beliefs
  - moral schema
  - Political ideology
  - deference to scientific authority
  - Trust in information sources
  - attitudes toward technology
  - ...

- As a result: Any given frame may mean different things to different people.
Through headlines, visuals, metaphors, sources cited, media frames provide cues to audiences.

WISE TRADITIONS PODCAST EPISODE 292

It’s Gene Therapy, Not a Vaccine
with Dr. David Martin

JANUARY 25, 2021 BY HILDA LABRADA GORE

Dr. David Martin, founder and chairman of M-CAM Inc, challenges our presuppositions about the new mRNA Covid-19 vaccines. Quoting the pharmaceutical companies themselves, David suggests that these are not vaccines, but, in actuality, gene therapy. He explains what the vaccines may do to us, what they are promising they can do for us, and how to distinguish the difference.

Listen to the episode here:
“Low-information publics” make sense of information through different filters

How do the media around me interpret and define this?

How much information do I need to decide?

How do those interpretations fit with my beliefs and other values?

It is crucial to understand the specific context in which we operate.
Getting back to vaccines:
The psychology of risk perceptions

- The risks that kill people the most and the risks that upset people the most are often unrelated
- We get upset about risky issues based on their potential impact on our lives

**RISK = HAZARD + OUTRAGE**

- Perceptions of benefits (or of no benefits) are equally important
For public risk perception ...

- Magnitude of harm more important than probability of harm
- Acceptability more important than probability
- Emphasis is put on “qualitative” factors rather than “quantitative” risk assessment
Risk Perception: Qualitative Factors

- **Factors associated with more concern:**
  - Involuntary
  - Controlled by others
  - Unclear benefits
  - Manmade
  - Unfamiliar
  - Affect some more than others (ex: children)

- **Factors associated with less concern:**
  - Voluntary
  - Under individual’s control
  - Clear benefits
  - Natural
  - Familiar
  - Affects everyone equally
Other Key Insights:

1. Acceptance of a message is often more closely related to the perceived “trustworthiness” of the messenger than to the content of the message itself.

2. Communication that does not account for values and concerns can be worse than not communicating at all.
So what role can museums and similar community based organizations can play in the rollout of the vaccine?

⇒ a place for the community to discuss their concerns
⇒ a place where people feel heard, not lectured
⇒ a place where people can have answers
How to erode trust & credibility

• Ignoring/downplaying perceptions of risk and concerns
• Trying to persuade our audiences that experts are right, their perceptions wrong
• Concealing risk/scientific uncertainty
• Assuming “education” is the only answer
In sum: for effective science communication

- Frames(s) matter … some are likely to resonate with audiences, are relevant in a specific social context
- There are VERY few real “anti-vax” people – individuals differ in their degree of hesitancy
- Trust matters but fear of the unknown is critical – do not take it for granted
- Know your target audience, their values and motivations, their perceptions of deterrents and benefits, which will evolve with societal developments