

Fake News under a Microscope

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Aims of the workshop

- Risk communication principles – *do and don't*
- **Risk Communication** -> *Fake News*



What is risk communication?

Risk communication is:

- The exchange of real-time information, advice and opinions between experts and people facing threats
- Threats to their health, economic or social well-being
- To enable people at risk to take informed decisions to protect themselves and their loved ones



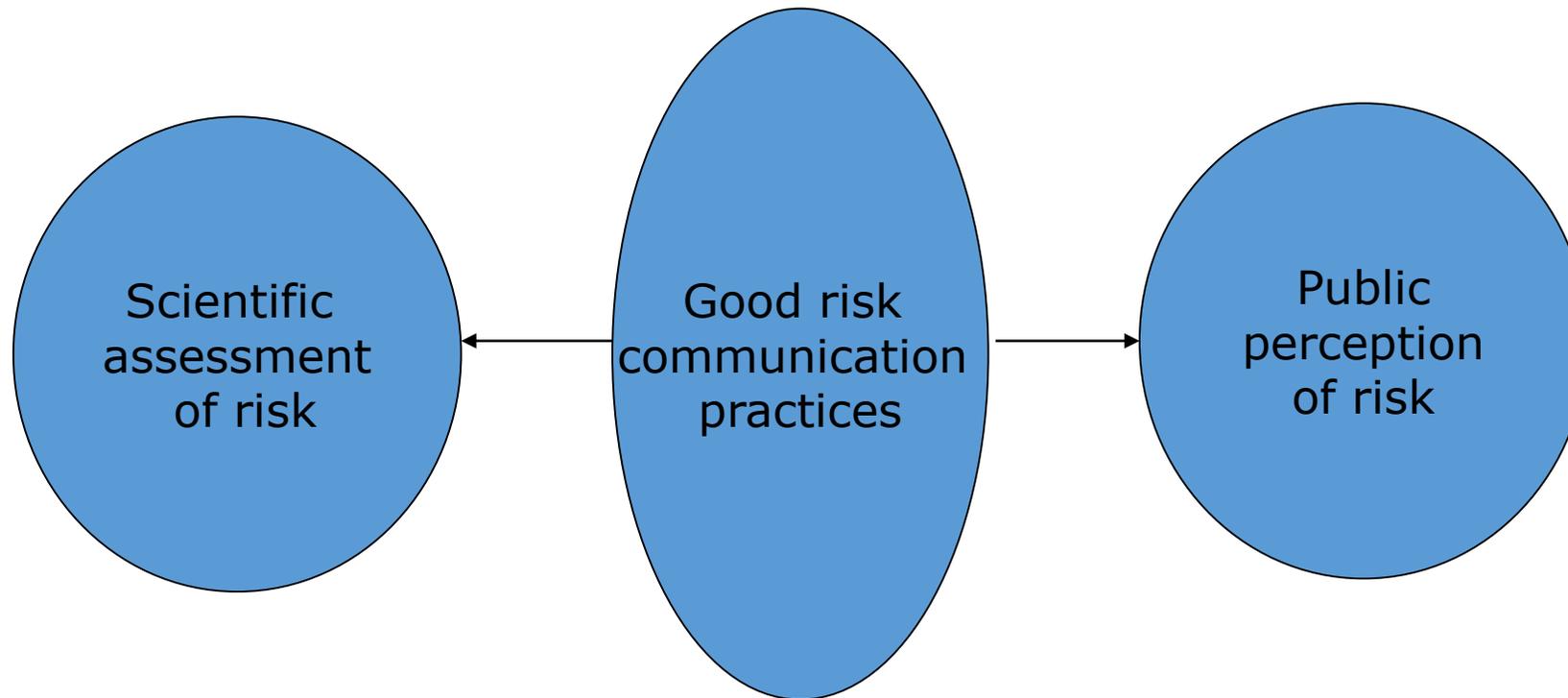
Principles of Risk Communication

(Lundgren & McMakin, 2004)

- **Integrate risk communication and risk regulation**
 - Pre-test; communicate early and often
 - Listen to stakeholders
- **Principles of presentation**
 - Know your audience; use diverse methods; simplify language and presentation, **not** content
 - Be objective not subjective
 - Be honest, clear and compassionate ;
 - Deal with uncertainty & concerns;
- **Engage; empathy; openness & responsiveness to emotions, fear and concerns;**
 - Demonstrate credibility, competence & commitment; benefits proposed/alternatives
 - Empower
- **Manage the process**
 - Clear goals; responsibility; planning; implementing; evaluation

How are you framing the risk?

- Risk communication is the balance that needs to be made between informing the target audience of the inherent risk without overstating or underplaying the risks (Warriner & Namvar, 2009)





Who is delivering the message?

- Who is the delivering the information?
 - In the Canada listeriosis outbreak in 2008, the Minister of Agriculture led the first federal press conference; giving the impression it was an agrifood safety, rather than a public health issue, which led to an erosion of trust in agrifood (Warriner & Namvar, 2009)
- A source may be distrusted if it is perceived to be biased and to have vested interests when communicating about a food safety risk (WHO, 2016)
- Food safety risk messages communicated by a company that is simply asserting the safety of their product may be received with public skepticism (WHO, 2016)

Who are your target audience?

Potentially vulnerable groups

- Pregnant women
- The elderly
- Children
- Those with immune-deficiencies or taking medication that weakens the immune system

Media Triggers

(from Bennett et al., 2001)



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Story **newsworthy** if:

- Questions of **blame**
- Alleged **secrets and cover-ups**
- **Human interest**
- Links with **high profile issues or personalities**
- **Conflict**
- **Signal value** (What next?)
- **Many people at risk** even if at low risk (It could be you)
- **Visual impact**
- Story links to **sex/crime**
- **Snowballing** of reportage

Planning your risk communication

- Who are your target audience?
- How are you going to communicate to the audience? – newspaper article? or alternative?
- How are you framing the risk? – Headline? what is your message?
- Who is delivering the message (and why)?
- What barriers can you identify?
- How are you measuring the impact?

Who is the audience? (media? Consumer?)

Principles of Risk Communication (Lundgren & McMakin, 2004)

Know your audience & know your situation

- Principles of process

- ✓ Regulatory, organizational and audience requirements; pre-test; communicate early and often

- Principles of presentation

- ✓ Know your audience; use diverse methods; simplify language and presentation **not** content; be objective not subjective; honest, clear compassionate ; deal with uncertainty & concerns; same info for all segments

- Principles of comparing risks

- ✓ Audience dependent: most acceptable – same risk at different times; risk vs standard; diff. estimates of same risk: rarely acceptable – risk vs cost; risk vs benefits

(from Cavello et al, 1988)

Barriers

(Lundgren & McMakin, 2004)

- **Organisational**
 - Inadequate resources; conflicting organisational requirement;
 - insufficient info to plan and set schedule; corporate protection requirements
- **Emotional**
 - Unwilling to see public as equal partner; belief that public cannot understand science
- **Audience**
 - Hostility and outrage; panic & denial: Mistrust; disagreement on acceptable level of risk; Lack of faith in science and institution.
- **Stigma**
- **Stability of the knowledge base**

What is success?

(Lundgren & McMakin, 2004)

- Care communication
 - Behaviour change: How long did change last?
Awareness to risk: Understanding of the risk
- Consensus
 - All segments represented: Understanding of risk to make decision: Consensus reached:
Can decision be implemented
- Crisis
 - All members alerted: Understanding of risk to make decision: Change in behaviour: Was risk info consistent

BOX 4.11

HOW TO MONITOR AND EVALUATE RISK COMMUNICATION MESSAGES AND APPROACHES

There are many ways to monitor risk communication and evaluate the effectiveness of risk communication messages and approaches, including those listed below.

Method	Description and purposes
Stakeholder dialogue	Consulting with stakeholders during and after a food safety risk has been addressed, to learn what works and what does not, to adjust the current approach and to learn lessons for the future.
Monitoring social media	Monitoring social media chatter regularly to identify emerging questions and concerns among the general public and target audiences. This information will help to adjust the approach and messages.
Media monitoring and analysis	Reviewing and analysing media coverage of the risk to adjust the approach and messages as the food safety issue evolves, and to evaluate the overall effectiveness of the approach and messages after the issue has been addressed. For example, it can be useful to examine whether messages were reflected accurately, and whether they were covered in the targeted media outlets.
Web analysis	Tracking how the organization's materials are used online (e.g. number viewed, downloaded, shared, etc.) and reviewing comments received from users, in order to adjust the communication approach and materials as the food safety issue evolves and after it has been addressed.
Targeted surveys	Tracking the opinions of target audiences over time to identify who, and estimate how many people, received and accepted the key messages. This kind of research can also provide insight into what communication methods are most appropriate for given target audiences. This research can be done regularly and is typically contracted out to public opinion firms.
Update risk assessment	Tracking for example the actual health risk, number of illnesses and levels of contamination, to determine whether the risk is increasing or decreasing and therefore whether the communication efforts are having an effect.

Final tips



(from Bennett et al.,2001)

- **Anticipate public impact**
 - Fright factors & media triggers; indirect effects
- **Plan a communication strategy**
 - Aims & objectives clear and agreed; periodic reviews; who are key stakeholders and how they perceive the issue; trust; message consistency;
- **Process of communication**
 - Who to involve; how and when; consistent & defensible; mechanisms of involvement; decisions on openness
- **Content of communication**
 - Facts; attend to values of the audience; tone; uncertainties, probabilities, relative risks & risk comparisons
- **Monitoring of decisions & outcomes**
 - Procedures in place to monitor, review and disseminate