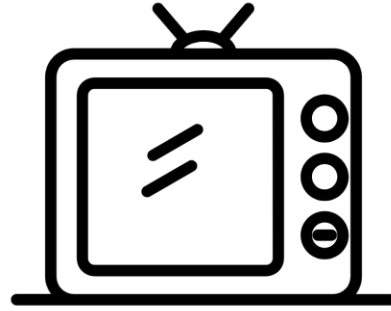


# Fact vs. Fiction: Research-Based Ways to Support Science Translation

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# About Me



- News media content analysis
- Surveys of public opinion, media exposure, media effects
- Qualitative interviews with journalists, PR representatives, policymakers, scientists

**INTERDISCIPLINARY  
RESEARCH LEADERS**

# Acknowledgements



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*Annual Review of Public Health*

Television News Coverage of  
Public Health Issues and  
Implications for Public Health  
Policy and Practice

April 2019

Sarah E. Gollust,<sup>1</sup> Erika Franklin Fowler,<sup>2</sup>  
and Jeff Niederdeppe<sup>3</sup>



## Three Main Points

1. The news media have their own norms, values and approaches to cover health news
2. Scholarly work on knowledge translation identifies best practices for scientific research to be better represented in news media
3. Funders should provide incentives for researchers to engage competently with journalists early and often

# Public Health Implications of News

## Societal Functions of News and Positive & Negative Public Health Implications

Function	Definition	Public health implications
Surveillance	Reporting events and information to the public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Sets the agenda for what the public and policy makers deem important</li><li>■ Enhances the salience of health issues within judgments about policy or politics</li><li>■ Provides educational content of variable quality to the public</li></ul>
Interpretation	Providing context for and meaning of issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Frames public health topics to emphasize certain causes, moral judgments, solutions, and target population</li></ul>
Socialization	Cultivating community values, beliefs, and norms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Promotes health-improving norms, social connectedness, and civic participation</li><li>■ Shifts public attitudes to be aligned with a social reality as represented on TV, inconsistent with objective conditions</li></ul>
Attention merchant	Attracting public attention to deliver an audience to advertisers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Emphasizes sensational or controversial content</li><li>■ Drives audiences toward commercial products that may or may not be health-promoting, including pharmaceuticals, unhealthy food or beverages, and political candidate ads</li></ul>

Source: Gollust, Fowler, Niederdeppe (2019) *Annual Review of Public Health*

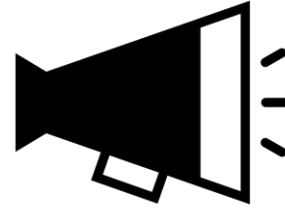
For scientists to translate their work to realize the *positive* public health implications, they must understand what the news values...

# News Media Norms

*Opportunities to shape coverage*

Sources: Gans (1979) *Deciding What's News*;  
Graber & Dunaway (2018) *Mass Media and American Politics*

- Novelty

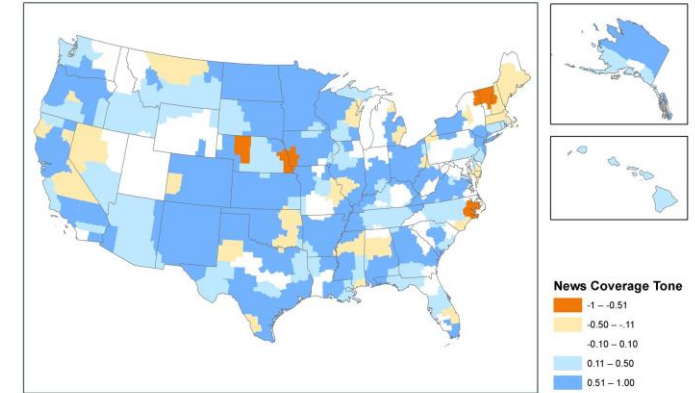


- Close to home
  - Geographic variability in coverage

- Features recognizable individuals

- Tells a story people can relate to

Tone of Product-Specific ACA News Coverage  
Constructed Weeks 10/1/2013 - 4/19/2014

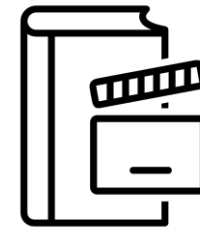


Gollust et al., *AJPH*, 2017

Decoding Angelina Jolie's double mastectomy and BRCA genes

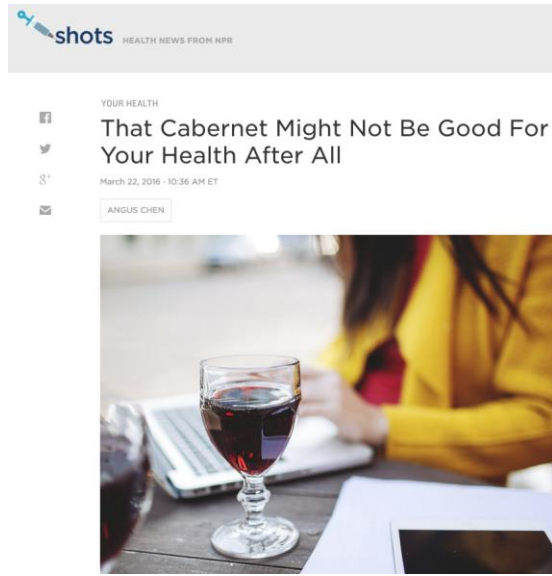


LA Times, May 2013



# News Media Norms

*Concerning coverage patterns*



Conflicting information<sup>1</sup>



Misinformation and/or lack of context<sup>2</sup>



Political frames<sup>3</sup>



Controversy<sup>4</sup>

Sources: <sup>1</sup>Nagler (2014). Adverse outcomes associated with media exposure to contradictory nutrition messages. <sup>2</sup>Pribble et al. 2006. Medical news for the public to use? What's on local TV News *Am J Manag Care*. <sup>3</sup>Gollust et al. 2017. Local TV news coverage of the ACA. *AJPH*. <sup>4</sup>Gollust et al. 2016. Understanding the Role of the News Media in HPV Vaccine Uptake in the United States: *Human Vaccines & Immunotherapeutics*. 2016. Nagler et al. 2015. Covering controversy: What are the implications for women's health? *Women's Health Issues*.

# Best Practices for Translating Science

*What are the  
challenges?*

	Scientists	Journalists
<i>Timelines</i>	Long	Short
<i>When to publicize</i>	Journal article just came out	When the information is significant, relates to current events, affects people
<i>Institutional barriers</i>	Press offices, gatekeepers	Editors, newsroom pressures, declining funding for health journalists, lack of access to journal articles
<i>Major incentives</i>	Getting it right (and getting attention)	Getting it right (and telling stories people will care about)
<i>Reputational concerns</i>	Concerned about funders, academic status, reputation of peers, scientific caution	Concerned with factual reporting, not how scientists are portrayed
<i>Other concerns</i>	Scooping oneself before the journal gives OK	Being scooped by other journalists

**Lack of time**  
**Information overload!**



# Best Practices for Translating Science

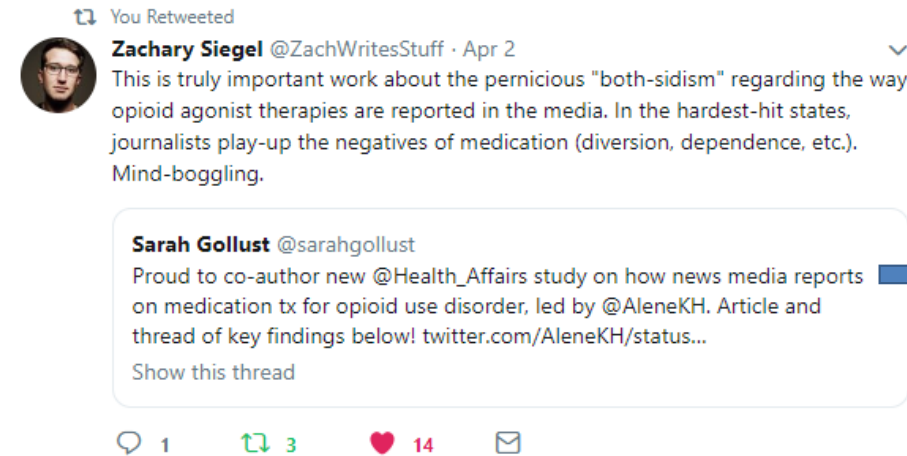
*What are some  
solutions?*

- Communicate bodies of research, not (only) single studies
- Traditional press release approach may not have desired impact, adds to information overload
- Identify target audiences (and target reporters / journalists) and tailor approach, timing, for that audience
- Seek out “knowledge brokers”—trusted intermediary organizations to help convey the message
- Consider translation and dissemination from the beginning
- **Relationships, relationships, relationships**
  - **Scientists can be a resource to journalists, well before studies come out**

# Best Practices for Translating Science

DIY

- So many more opportunities for scientists to share their work with interested audiences
  - Blogs, Twitter, other social media, op-eds, issue briefs, webinars, etc.
- Helps curate news at the timelines that are more meaningful
- Creates opportunities for networks and relationship-building



Twitter exchange, April 2, 2019



Columbia Journalism Review,  
April 17, 2019

# What Can Funders Do?

## 1. Support media training and science communication training

- Media training (such as at conferences or webinars)
- Science communication training
  - National Academies Science of Science Communication colloquia
- Encourage use of existing resources for science writing, press releases
  - See: [HealthNewsReview.Org](http://HealthNewsReview.Org) – checklists and tips for press releases and health journalism

# What Can Funders Do?

## 2. Require dissemination plans

- Dissemination planning should start early– before funding!
  - Goals
  - Target audiences
  - Timing to reach those audiences
  - Format and messages that will resonate
  - Types of outlets
- Dissemination planning process should engage with relevant stakeholders
- Scientists should budget for dissemination support
  - Infographics, graphic design
  - Writers

# What Can Funders Do?

## 3. Encourage peer-reviewed journals as well as and less traditional outlets

- Training in use of social media
- Training in writing blogs and op-eds (e.g., Op-Ed Project)
- Support open-access journal publication (including publication fees)
- Ask researchers to report examples of media engagement
- Ask researchers to report peer-reviewed and non-peer reviewed publications



## Conclusions

1. The news media have their own norms, values and approaches to cover health news
2. Scholarly work on knowledge translation identifies best practices for scientific research to be better represented in news media
3. Funders should provide incentives for researchers to engage competently with journalists early and often

# Resources

## Review of news coverage patterns

Gollust, Fowler, Niederdeppe. (2019) Television News Coverage of Public Health Issues and Implications for Public Health Policy and Practice. *Annual Review of Public Health*. 40: 167-185.

## Knowledge translation

Lavis et al. (2003) How can research organizations more effectively transfer research knowledge to decision makers? *Milbank Quarterly*. 81: 221-248.

## Dissemination planning

Brownson et al. (2019) Getting the Word Out: New Approaches for Disseminating Public Health Science. *Journal of Public Health Management and Practice*. 24(2): 102-111.

Brownson et al. (2013). Designing for Dissemination Among Public Health Researchers: Findings from a National Survey in the U.S. *Am J Public Health*. 103(9): 1693-1699.

AHRQ Dissemination Planning: <https://www.ahrq.gov/patient-safety/resources/advances/vol4/planning.html>

PCORI Dissemination Toolkit: <https://www.pcori.org/sites/default/files/PCORI-DI-Toolkit-February-2015.pdf>

RWJF/AcademyHealth Dissemination Toolkit: <https://www.rwjf.org/en/library/research/2013/07/navigating-the-translation-and-dissemination-of-phssr-findings.html>

Looking  
Forward to the  
Discussion!

