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

Sarah E. Gollust,¹ Erika Franklin Fowler,² and Jeff Niederdeppe³

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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
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

- Novelty
- Close to home
  - Geographic variability in coverage
- Features recognizable individuals
- Tells a story people can relate to


Gollust et al., AJPH, 2017

Decoding Angelina Jolie’s double mastectomy and BRCA genes

LA Times, May 2013
News Media Norms

Concerning coverage patterns

1. Conflicting information
2. Misinformation and/or lack of context
3. Political frames
4. Controversy

Sources:
3. Gollust et al. 2017. Local TV news coverage of the ACA. AJPH.
### Best Practices for Translating Science

#### What are the challenges?

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


**Knowledge translation**


**Dissemination planning**


Looking Forward to the Discussion!