

# Communication of Cancer Prevention Messages

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# National Cancer Institute (NCI)

NCI is the nation's leading federal agency for cancer research, the largest funder of cancer research in the world, and the world's largest organization solely dedicated to cancer research.

- Established in 1937
- Part of the U.S. National Institutes of Health
- Acting director: Douglas Lowy, MD
- 30 divisions, offices, and centers, including:
  - Center for Global Health (CGH)
  - Office of Communications and Public Liaison (OCPL)



# NCI Mission

- Conduct cutting-edge research on prevention, causes, and treatment of cancer
- Train the next generation of cancer researchers
- Fund and support the nation's vast network of scientists and cancer research institutions
- Inform and educate the American people and the world about cancer

# The Art of Communications: Overview

- Role of Communications
- Building Effective Relationships and Partnerships
- Cancer Research and the Media
- Cancer Prevention Communications
  - Effective Messaging
  - Science Reporting
  - Social Media Channels

# Role of Communications

- Increase the target audience's knowledge and awareness of a health issue, problem, or solution
- Increase perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes that may change social norms
- Prompt action/Policy changes
- Demonstrate or illustrate healthy skills
- Reinforce knowledge, attitudes, or behavior – empowerment
- Show the benefit of behavior change

Excerpted from *Making Health Communication Programs Work*, U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services, National Institutes of Health, National Cancer Institute.

# Planning for Effective Communications

- Primary components of a communications plan
  - Audiences
    - Institutional leadership and information officers
    - Scientific community
    - Advocates and other partners
    - Policy makers
    - Publics
  - Strategies
  - Messages
  - Channels

# Partnerships and Relationship Building

## Institutional Leadership & Information Officers

- Build trust by engaging at each stage
- Review research findings to determine how to best communicate
- Provide media training
- Coach on complex/controversial issues
- Stay on message

## Scientists Clinicians Physicians

- May serve as subject matter experts with external audiences
- May need media training
- May need resources to share new findings in plain language
- Stay on message

## Advocates & Other Partners

- Passionate about specific issues
- Engage before going public
- Can help share and amplify messages via their own relationships and channels
- Stay on message

## Policy Makers

- Identify those with interest in science
- Invite them to your hospital, lab, or facilities
- Provide regular, brief updates by leadership and scientists (not media events)
- Invite to special scientific events/conferences

# Cancer Prevention Communications

- Work with physicians, researchers, and patients in development of any advertising, campaign or communications products
- Limit the use of emotional appeal and avoid language that evokes fear or hope for survival
- Promote realistic expectations
- Explain cost, risks, potential for harm
- Avoid jargon and use clear, concise and simple language
- Focus on audience-centric information
- Let the experts speak, BUT focus on scientific evidence
- Embrace a culture of accuracy and evidence-based information

# Cancer Research and the Media

- Prevention: high interest from trade and mainstream media, as well as the public
- Make the media your partner
- Strong criteria for press releases and other communications
- Messages must be evidence-based



# Science Reporting

- Communications professionals acts as a bridge between institutions/scientists and the media/public to relay what is really valid and useful
- Serve as honest brokers
- Relay the strengths and limitations of study findings
- Avoid use of superlatives in reporting, discussing, explaining cancer research such as “breakthrough,” “game changer,” and “miracle”
- Report new findings in the context of existing knowledge

# Effective Cancer Risk Messages

- People want cancer risk messages to give them hope for preventing cancer and that risk information is less threatening when written in optimistic terms.
- When faced with “bad news,” they look for why it does not apply to them.
- Risk messages should address key questions--“How serious is the risk?” and “What can be done to reduce or avoid the risk?” as well as explain where to get more information.
- Combining brief text and visuals (such as charts, graphs) can increase attention and understanding.
- Statistical risk information is difficult for many people to understand.
- Provide “the complete picture”—that is, what is known and what is not yet known about a risk, and what it means for “human beings.”

# Use Multiple Communications Channels

- Owned
  - Website (incl. blog)
  - Social media channels
  - E-Newsletters/announcements
- Earned
  - News coverage
  - Advocacy channels
- Paid



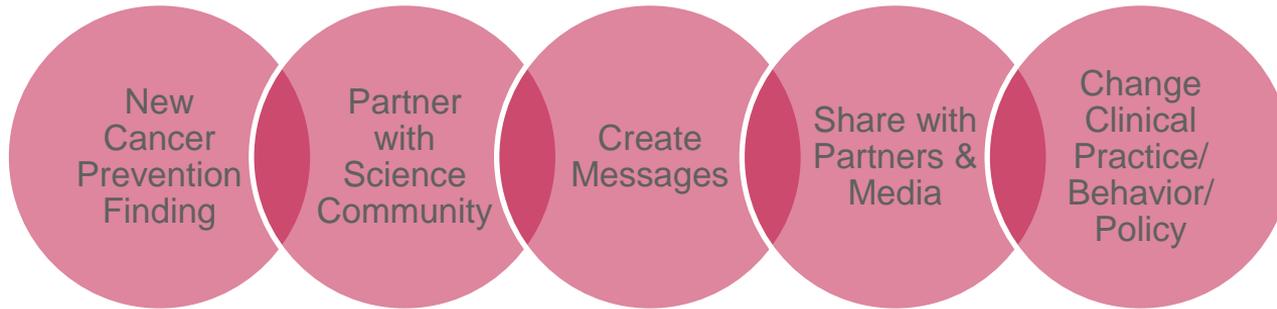
# Policy Example: Colombia

Court rules against censorship of sugary drink PSA



- Excise taxes
- No smoking laws in public buildings
- No smoking laws in restaurants and bars
- Walking trails

# Cancer Prevention Communications



# NCI Resources

- National Cancer Institute: [cancer.gov](https://www.cancer.gov)
- Instituto Nacional del Cancer: [cancer.gov/espanol](https://www.cancer.gov/espanol)
- Physician Data Query (PDQ): [cancer.gov/publications/pdq](https://www.cancer.gov/publications/pdq)
- Base de datos integral del NCI (PDQ): [cancer.gov/espanol/publicaciones/pdq](https://www.cancer.gov/espanol/publicaciones/pdq)
- *Making Health Communications Programs Work*: [cancer.gov/publications/health-communication/pink-book.pdf](https://www.cancer.gov/publications/health-communication/pink-book.pdf)
- Health Information National Trends Survey (HINTS): [hints.cancer.gov](https://www.hints.cancer.gov)
- Twitter: [@theNCI](https://twitter.com/theNCI) & [@NCIespanol](https://twitter.com/NCIespanol)
- Facebook: [facebook.com/cancer.gov](https://www.facebook.com/cancer.gov) & [facebook.com/cancer.govEspanol](https://www.facebook.com/cancer.govEspanol)

**Thank you!**



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