A Vanishing Monopoly? The Changing Role of the Media in Reporting About Science

ILSI
Miami, January 20, 2012

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Disclosures

I’m a full-time employee of Thomson Reuters, a provider of news about health and other subjects.

My wife is a full-time employee of CNN, a provider of news about health and other subjects.
According to a report released today...

Today's Random Medical News

from the New England Journal of Panic-Inducing Gobbledygook
Why Is It So Bad?

I used to think correlation implied causation.

Then I took a statistics class. Now I don't.

Sounds like the class helped. Well, maybe.
Who Covers Health?

In a national survey of U.S. health and medical journalists:

• Nearly 70% had at least a bachelor’s degree
• 19% reported having a master’s degree;
• 4.5% had a doctorate; about 3% were M.D.s
• Almost half had a degree in journalism
• 13% had a degree in communications
• 8% were “life sciences” majors

What is Reuters Health?

THREE WIRES COVERING 110 STUDIES EACH WEEK

**Reuters Medical News**

Keeps physicians, researchers and other medical professionals informed of developments in their field

**Reuters Health eLine**

Wellness and health care for the general public

**Reuters Health Industry Briefing**

Business information for the healthcare community
How Reuters Health Chooses Stories

• Impact factor
• Likelihood of changing behavior/clinical practice
• Strength of evidence
• Novelty
# How Reuters Health Covers Stories

## Our Criteria for What Users Need in Stories

+ What’s the total cost?
+ How often do benefits occur?
+ How often do harms occur?
+ How strong is the evidence?
+ Is this condition exaggerated?
+ Are there alternative options?
+ Is this really a new approach?
+ Is it available to me?
+ Who’s promoting this?
+ Do they have a conflict of interest?
How Do Others Cover Stories?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria (Did the Story Adequately...)</th>
<th>% Satisfactory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discuss costs</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantify benefits</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantify harms</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discuss existing alternative options</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seek independent sources and explore conflicts of interests in sources</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoid disease mongering</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discuss quality of the evidence</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establish the true novelty of the approach</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discuss availability of the new approach</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Go beyond a news release</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Who are Today’s Media, Really?

Scienceblogging Networks Come of Age, But What About Health?

Posted by Brian Reid in Healthcare Insights, Medical Communications, Social Media Insights & Trends on July 7, 2011

Earlier this week, the world of science writing was turned on its head by the launch of a new blog network from Scientific American, melding SciAm’s impressive staff with some rising stars of science writing. The
Who are Today’s Media, Really?

• **95** weekly science sections in newspapers in 1989

Columbia Journalism Review:
http://www.cjr.org/currents/hard_numbers_if2013.php
Who are Today’s Media, Really?

• **95** weekly science sections in newspapers in 1989
• **34** in 2005

Columbia Journalism Review:
http://www.cjr.org/currents/hard_numbers_jf2013.php
Who are Today’s Media, Really?

- **95** weekly science sections in newspapers in 1989
- **34** in 2005
- **19** in 2012

Columbia Journalism Review:
http://www.cjr.org/currents/hard_numbers_jf2013.php
Map of Science Blog Networks

Legend: Blue=Blog networks | Small yellow ovals=Individual blogger | Rectangle=Personal blog | Triangle=publication/organization | Square=Government

Source: Brian Reid, Open sourced via Google Docs Sept 2010, multiple authors.
How to Get Reporters’ Attention

From: System Administrator
To: Oransky, Ivan (M Edit Reu Hlth)
Subject: E-mail Quota Warning - Your Mailbox is 80 percent of its allowable size
Sent: Apr 29, 2011 8:00 PM

Your mailbox exceeds 400,000 Kilobytes (KB) in size. Your mailbox size is currently 510187 KB.

When your mailbox size exceeds 500MB, you will be unable to send mail until enough messages or other items are deleted to reduce the size below 500MB. You will continue to receive incoming email until your mailbox reaches 1,024MB (1 Gigabyte), at which point all inbound email will be returned to the sender.
What You Can Do

• Develop relationships
  – Answer calls
  – Don’t hype
  – Don’t just call when you have a paper published
  – Send newsworthy items and ideas from other groups
  – Be an reporter’s back pocket expert

• Help news offices write better press releases
Pitch Less, Tip More

PR, media relations folks: Tip more, pitch less to reach reporters

I stopped pitching reporters when I started this business (although I still coach many clients in smart techniques for doing so). Now that I’m on the other side and getting...
Use Social Media to Develop Relationships with Reporters

http://muckrack.com/
How Sources Develop Relationships with Reporters – and Vice Versa
Use Twitter

• Follow reporters to see what they’re interested in
• Don’t use it to send the same thing to 30 reporters
Avoid Jargon

• Talk to me like I’m your smart 14-year-old nephew
Doctors are quietly opting out of medicine

by Nancy Pando, LICSW

Dr. Ryan Flesher was working his usual shift in the Emergency Department that night in July of 2006. The hospital was short-
Start Your Own Blog

http://skepticalscalpel.blogspot.com/
Double bind: Duplication of bandaging paper leads to retraction

The *Journal of Vascular Surgery* is retracting — with vigor — a paper it published online in March after discovering that the authors had published essentially the same article for the *Journal of the European Academy of Dermatology and Venereology* some months earlier.

Both papers are titled “Randomized controlled trial comparing treatment outcome of two compression bandaging systems and standard care without compression in patients with venous leg ulcers.” The work was funded by the Health, Welfare and Food Bureau of Hong Kong and a grant from *Lohmann & Rauscher* GmbH & Co KG, a German company that makes compression bandages and other surgical supplies.

According to the retraction notice in *JVS*: Read the rest of this entry »

Written by amarcus41
November 27, 2012 at 8:30 am

Posted in *china retractions, dermatology retractions, duplication retractions, elsevier, freely available, journal of vascular surgery, surgery retractions, the netherlands, uk retractions*
Start Your Own Blog

White Coat Underground
Musings on the intersection of science, medicine, and culture

Call me a commie, I dare you

I've been following a discussion on twitter about the work environment of post-docs and other scientists. There are a lot of parallels with medical training.

http://whitecoatunderground.com/
Start Your Own Blog

Medical Lessons
...as a patient and a doctor, on cancer and communicating about health...

Elaine Schattner

Welcome to my website and blog!

I'm a physician, writer and speaker with an informed perspective on health care. I've been a patient ever since I can remember. As a child with scoliosis – a curved spine, I learned early on what it was like to wait in doctors’ offices and be treated as though my concerns didn’t matter. Years later, long after med school, I found myself a working mom with breast cancer. By then, I’d become an oncologist and researcher in the area of immune and malignant blood disorders. Gradually, my health got the best of me. Time off was not my choice, but it did give me insights on being a patient, being a doctor and privacy.

http://www.medicallessons.net/
Get to Know AHCJ

Affordable Care Act goes before the Supreme Court: What you need to know

On March 26, the Supreme Court starts six hours of oral arguments over three days – its longest case in years – on four separate legal questions arising from the Affordable Care Act. A decision is expected in late June.

We talked to T.R. Goldman, a longtime legal journalist who has written about the case and asked him to address five key questions for journalists, including how those far from Washington, D.C., can cover the story.

In addition, Joanne Kenen, AHCJ’s health reform topic leader, has selected some links to further reading, webcasts and health and legal blogs that may be useful.

Brawley named as keynote speaker for Health Journalism 2012

Otis Brawley, M.D., the American Cancer Society’s...
Get to Know AHCJ

- >1,300 members in every U.S. state, >25 countries
- Strict membership guidelines: Journalists only
- Annual conference with workshops, newsmakers, more
- Conference exhibitors span health care
- Website [http://www.healthjournalism.org](http://www.healthjournalism.org) has reporting guides, blog, tipsheets, other resources

http://healthjournalism.org/
Let’s Work to Avoid This

Kill or cure?
Help to make sense of the Daily Mail’s ongoing effort to classify every inanimate object into those that cause cancer and those that prevent it.

If any of these results seems incorrect, please report it using the link next to the article.

**air pollution** causes cancer #
- Pollution peril ‘worse at home’ [Incorrect?]

**alcohol** both causes and prevents cancer #
- Binge drinking ‘increases breast cancer risk’ [Incorrect?]
- A drink a day increases risk of breast cancer [Incorrect?]
- Cancer alert: Don’t eat, drink or tan too much [Incorrect?]
- Bowel cancer danger of just one glass of wine per day [Incorrect?]
- Shocking ignorance over cancer risks [Incorrect?]
- The cancer generation: how Britons’ hedonistic lifestyles are taking a terrible toll [Incorrect?]
- Mouth cancer warning for binge drinkers [Incorrect?]
- Is anything safe to eat? Cancer report adds bacon, ham and drink to danger list [Incorrect?]
- Modern living to blame for cancer epidemic [Incorrect?]
- Cancer: foods to avoid? [Incorrect?]
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