Food Safety: A Professionals Guide to Effective Food Risk Communication

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IFIC and the IFIC Foundation

- **Mission:** To effectively communicate science-based information about food safety and nutrition to health professionals, government officials, educators, journalists, and consumers... for the public good.

- Food and beverage industry support

- Government and academic network

www.foodinsight.org

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IFIC and the IFIC Foundation

- Our products
  - Consumer research
  - Extensive partnerships
  - Consumer resources
  - 90,000 FACTS science advocate followers @FACTSFollowers
Why Effective Food Risk Communication...

- Why effective food risk communication? Why now?
- How and when should it be used?
- What are the practical steps YOU can incorporate to improve public understanding?

“FDA Proposes a Limit on Arsenic and Rice”

“Processed meat causes cancer, says WHO”

“The New York Times”

“National recall for frozen vegetables, fruit from Wash. company”

“NBC Money”

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2016 IFIC Foundation Food & Health Survey...

- Consumers trust
  - Health professionals
  - Government agencies
- Sources of information
  - Health websites
  - News channels
  - Government agencies
  - Family and friends

52%

20%
Why Effective Food Risk Communication...

- The Science Communications gap is closing... slowly but surely
- But... public perceptions about food safety is rapidly changing

57% Foodborne illness
50% Chemicals in food
48% Pesticides/residues

Source: 2016 IFIC Foundation Food & Health Survey
www.foodinsight.org
How Americans define a “healthy eating style”

How do you define a healthy eating style?

- Limited or no artificial ingredients or...
- Natural foods
- Can easily be incorporated into my daily...
- Flexible and easy to maintain over time
- Organic foods
- Eating only foods I define as healthy
- Can include higher calorie treats in...
- Everything you eat over a long period of...
- Non-“GMO” foods
- None of the above

Ranked #1
Ranked #1-3

The right mix of different foods
Limited or no artificial ingredients or...
Natural foods
Can easily be incorporated into my daily...
Flexible and easy to maintain over time
Organic foods
Eating only foods I define as healthy
Can include higher calorie treats in...
Everything you eat over a long period of...
Non-“GMO” foods
None of the above

51%
41%
37%
36%
26%
25%
23%
17%
17%
16%
4%

Source: 2016 IFIC Foundation Food & Health Survey
www.foodinsight.org
Today’s Challenge . . .
How to improve public understanding

- Building a practical Communication Response Framework
  - Assess the situation
  - Identify specific goals and objectives
  - Understand the target audience(s)
  - Develop key messages / engage strategic partners and influencers
  - Employ tactics and actions

Source: www.foodinsight.org
Communication Response Framework

Assess the situation and gather information
Communication Response Framework

- Identify goals and objectives relevant to the issue
  - 1 – 3 is sufficient
  - Communication goals vs. non-communication goals

- Understand and assess the target audience(s)
  - Characteristics, concerns, needs; audience specific research
  - Narrow vs broad audience
  - African American males over 65 years of age vs pregnant women vs the general public
Communication Response Framework

- Develop your key messages
  - What happened; what’s being done about it?
  - What does it mean; what is the risk?
  - Who’s affected; what should I do
  - Where can I get more information

- Employ strategic tactics and actions
  - News media
  - Social networks
  - Partner and influencer networks

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“Food Safety: A Communicator’s Guide to Improving Understanding”

- The communication response framework and process
  - Framework elements
  - Worksheets and fictional examples for effective food risk communication
    - Contact lists
    - Message maps
    - Resources and fact sheets
- Available in English
  - Translations forthcoming

PDF available at www.foodinsight.org

Source: www.foodinsight.org
Case Studies of Effective Food Risk Communication

IARC Evaluation of Red and Processed Meat

FDA Assessment of Arsenic in Rice Foods
IARC Evaluation of Red and Processed Meat, October 2015

- Successfully assessed the situation
- Engaged partners, experts and key influencers
  - Cancer research
  - Food safety, health, nutrition
- Proactive and reactive communication strategies
- Waged successful traditional media campaign
IARC Evaluation of Red and Processed Meat, October 2015

- Traditional media impressions in less than 24 hours

96 Million

ABC NEWS

NBC NEWS
IARC Evaluation of Red and Processed Meat, October 2015

“Hold on. Let me stop right here. Eating bacon is not as bad as smoking when it comes to cancer. Just no.”

“We have seen no significant decreases in consumption of hot dogs and bacon.”

“If you’re going to avoid everything that has any correlation with cancer whatsoever — don’t walk outside, don’t walk down the streets in Sydney, there’s going to be very little in life that you do in the end.”

“These days everything can cause cancer. Breathing the air can cause cancer to some people. I will continue to shop for food just like I always have. I don’t want to be living in fear about what I put in my body.”

“Brigette M” (female 35 – 49)

AFP News
FDA Assessment: Arsenic in Rice Foods, April 2016

- Successfully assessed the situation
- Engaged partners, experts and key influencers
  - Health professionals
  - Food safety, health, nutrition, toxicology
  - Regulatory partners
  - Mothers, caregivers
- Proactive and reactive communication strategies
- Waged successful social media campaign (pod cast; Twitter, FB)

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FDA Assessment: Arsenic in Rice Foods, April 2016

- Over 200,000 Social Media impressions and counting . . .

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"Facebook today sent me a message about how they enjoyed and appreciated the podcast. So the message seems to be getting out there"
A Final Word on Social Media: Overwhelming but . . .
A Necessary Tool to Improve Public Understanding

- Number of social network users worldwide from 2016 - 2019
  - In Billions
  - Source: Statista, 2016

2016: 2.22B*
2019: 2.72B*

Source: Statista 2016 *years end projections by Statista
Practical Tactics to Influence and Inform via Social Media

- Build upon current content
- Promote before, during and after event – be quick to post as issues rapidly evolve
  - Post often (3 – 4 times/day) on Twitter
- Employ search advertising methods
- Target those who search “branded” products; those who post and discuss specific issues
- Bring the conversation to the consumer; sites that are sharing info and engaged with commenters

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**Action Items for Effective Food Risk Communication**

- Identify tools and resources to create or enhance your communications framework
- Develop a communications framework to include:
  - Assessment
  - Engagement
  - Communication
- Enhance your presence and influence in social media

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References
- International Center of Excellence in Food Risk Communication. http://www.foodriskcommunications.org
Thank You!

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