

Reflections on the presentation:

# Organisational responses: Influencing behaviour and communicating risk

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Lost in Translation: a cross-disciplinary analysis of knowledge exchange and effectiveness in animal disease management

# Communicating risks and uncertainty

- Three phases (Leiss, 1996)

1. One way communication (education of public)



2. Persuasive communication (change behaviours)



3. Two-way communication and exchange (all actors)

# Communicating risks and uncertainty

- Exchange of information
- Communication of risk but also consultation needed regarding risk assessment and management (FAO)
- Communication found as an important factor regarding uncertainties surrounding animal disease management
- Agree that the 'public' should not be the only focus of action

# Strategies for containing animal disease: A framework

## Arenas of action

- Prevention: or reducing the occurrence of animal disease.
- Anticipation: or recognising, predicting and planning for outbreaks.
- Alleviation: or arrangements for response to disease-occurrence.

## Level of policy

- The strategic level: structures and processes that shape principles of containment.
- The tactical level: where strategic goals and influences are translated into rules, procedures and tools for decision making.
- The operational level: practical contexts of disease containment - outcomes/repercussions of strategic decisions within containment.

**Uncertainties in the governance of animal disease: an interdisciplinary framework for analysis (2010)** Robert Fish, Zoe Austin, Robert Christley, Philip M. Haygarth, Louise Heathwaite, Sophia Latham, William Medd, Maggie Mort, David M. Oliver, Roger Pickup, Jonathan M. Wastling, Brian Wynne (*in prep*)

# Framework example: *Cryptosporidium*

	<i>Policy Level</i>		
<i>Strategy of containment</i>	<i>Strategic/ command</i>	<i>Tactical</i>	<i>Operational</i>
<i>Prevention</i>	<i>Catchment management Programmes</i>	<i>Scheme Prescriptions/ Items of work.</i>	<i>Farmer and advisor conduct</i>
<i>Anticipation</i>	<i>United Utilities Chief Scientists Group</i>	<i>Design of sampling Strategy</i>	<i>Slide analysis of water samples</i>
<i>Alleviation</i>	<i>Outbreak control Teams</i>	<i>Case attribution strategy/public communications</i>	<i>Issuing of boil water notices</i>
<i>Care</i>	<i>Compensation policy of Utilities</i>	<i>Legal mechanisms</i>	<i>Compensation to affected businesses through negligence</i>

# A framework for communication?

	<i>Policy Level</i>		
<i>Strategy of containment</i>	<i>Strategic/ command</i>	<i>Tactical</i>	<i>Operational</i>
<i>Prevention</i>	<p><b>Government</b> agencies raising awareness during all stages of disease containment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accurate and timely response needed</li> <li>• Media departments now present in all major agencies – HPA, VLA etc.</li> <li>• Better management to enhance positive rather than negative media effects?</li> </ul>	<p>Communication and dissemination of information by <b>researchers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need for information to reach a wider audience</li> <li>• More research should have practical applications? (RELU!)</li> <li>• Greater stakeholder engagement at the earlier stage of research...</li> </ul>	<p>Communication with <b>farmers</b> regarding biosecurity measures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government mistrust can hinder communication</li> <li>• Local vets to communicate risks</li> <li>• Farming is a diverse industry – range of media needed</li> </ul>
<i>Anticipation</i>			
<i>Alleviation</i>			
<i>Care</i>			

# Role of the media

- Media may influence public perception/opinion in unpredictable ways
- Policy can be based on public opinion in addition to scientific evidence?
- Media may fuel public anxiety/misconception of risk
- High media coverage may lead to greater levels of false positive reporting for some diseases...
- But, may also encourage the reporting of cases in other diseases - Cryptosporidium

# How best to use the media in communicating animal disease issues?

nature

www.nature.com/nature

Vol 437 | Issue no. 7055 | 1 September 2005

## Responding to uncertainty

Public controversies that involve scientific uncertainty can be influenced by mavericks. Open confrontation and analysis serves the public better than excommunication.

In May 2002, the Science Media Centre (SMC), a UK organization dedicated to providing journalists with access to scientists, conducted a closed seminar in which government officials, reporters, researchers and others reviewed a calamity of communication and of public response to science. The flashpoint had been some ill-judged remarks made at a press conference in late 2001, suggesting that the triple-vaccine regimen supplied to the UK population against measles, mumps and rubella might be associated with autism. What followed were campaigns by the government to reassure parents, and by parents for separate vaccines on demand and against alleged conspiracies by the scientific establishment. As a result, many children were not vaccinated, and deaths resulted that could have been avoided.

The seminar concluded on a dilemma that still faces any government faced by a crisis bedevilled with scientific uncertainties, such as today's threat of avian flu. Is it better for authorities simply to reassure, resisting discussion of uncertainties in the expectation that the public would be paralysed or panic-stricken by the lack of clarity? Or should leaders assume a degree of maturity on the part of the media and public, and represent the state of the science, risks and all?

*Nature* would always urge the latter. But the mass media find it

a maverick voice, that extreme perspective needs to be exhibited as such. It should be presented in the context of the range of scientific judgement: not dismissed by assertion, but discussed and visualized against a background of expert opinion and the conclusions of studies.

Some societies have been known to lobby the media publicly or discreetly to try to discourage them from allowing minority voices to be heard. Nothing could be more counter-productive. Even if a high-profile scientist is judged by peers to be lacking credibility, the media will rightly be provoked by attempts at censorship, which fuel allegations of a conspiracy, adding perceived weight to maverick claims. It is better to attack such claims explicitly on a scientific basis.

Such problems arise in any scientific country. The SMC has made a particular contribution to mitigating them in Britain. The brainchild of Susan Greenfield, the director of the Royal Institution of Great Britain, which hosts it, its success can be credited above all to the robust

**"The UK Science Media Centre provides quotes from experts in immediate response to breaking stories, and in-depth briefings for longer-running controversies."**