

THE MEDIA IN THE SERVICE OF HEALTH

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SUMMARY

The media are certainly in the service of health - following it with their information, advice, statistics, discoveries, innovations. There is a well-known saying that health is the greatest wealth. Being healthy and taking care of one's health is a good thing. This article presents the media in the service of health and health care. The World Health Organization stresses that the media should cooperate with health services in promoting health. The introduction emphasizes the growing presence and availability of media in daily life, as well as its relevance in health education. In doing so, people of different ages, occupations and education are informed about health and advised about healthy living. The article goes on to discuss the importance of the media in the world. The media have various roles: information, education, instruction, and entertainment, but in doing so they must be ethical. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines health as a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the simple absence of disease or infirmity. The article then discusses the importance of health in our lives. The mass media reaches a great number of readers, listeners, and viewers each day with up-to-date and varied information, making them the most essential source of information regarding health and a healthy living. They transmit information from the sender (doctors, experts, and institutions) to the recipient - the people themselves. Health awareness strongly influences the care and treatment of individuals. There is talk of cooperation between the media and health care institutions in the function of improving people's health. Physician-media communication was also analyzed, contributing to better information on health and the health system. The article provides valuable information and guidance concerning the relationship between health and the media. The article concludes with a discussion of the media during the COVID-19 pandemic. Research is cited showing that demand for media content increased during the pandemic. The media has a critical role to play in alerting the public about the pandemic, the disease's progress, and how to battle COVID-19. Unfortunately, the media has had a harmful influence on human health, particularly the propagation of fear, panic, and excitement, as well as cardiac and mental illnesses. The media inundates the public with varied facts on the proliferation of COVID-19 in Croatia and throughout the world with daily news broadcasts.

Key words: health - media – communication - COVID-19 pandemic - World Health Organization - Croatia

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INTRODUCTION

When we mention health, we are referring to a state of harmonic balance, or homeostasis, in the structure and functioning of organisms, as well as mental and social equilibrium. When God created man in His image, He wanted him to be healthy and happy. He breathed his spirit and wants him to be completely healthy! And in the end, the man realized that health was important to him. (Dodig 2016) One should turn around and want to live a healthy life. When we look at the news nowadays, we see a lot of information regarding health. The media conveys messages about health and provides information about health and healthy living. In addition, they inform the public about health, news in the world of medicine and encourage the public to prevent various diseases. People frequently state that their health is their most significant asset, and that their health should be preserved and protected.

One must look after one's health and live a healthy lifestyle, avoiding stress, fear, and work overload, improving one's nutrition, and cultivating a healthy spiritual and physical life. Health is an important part of life. We certainly need to work on promoting health, above all on promoting a healthy life. The media play an important role in this, encouraging individuals or groups to monitor their health and giving advice on healthy

living. Health is one of the essential values for a good life. Today's modern world has made great strides in terms of health. For the believer, health is a gift of God, but also the care of every human being. That is why the Catechism of the Catholic Church wants to emphasize that health should be respected and cared for: "Life and physical health are precious gifts entrusted to us by God. We must take reasonable care of them, taking into account the needs of others and the common good." Everything that God has created has its purpose, and that is to serve man, serve his life. We can say that "health is important for good human life. It is, however, a good, which, as is often shown in life, is not guaranteed to man." (Aničić 2011). Many say that diseases are caused by unhealthy diets and improper living. Man is a being instructed to work, to live in nature, to feed on food from nature, and to live surrounded by his family. Today's man, on the other hand, takes the other path: he lives in a polluted environment, he doesn't move, he isn't physically active, he consumes unhealthy foods, and he lives for money. When man lives not in accordance with nature and God's laws, it is logical that he becomes ill. We are all in dire need for health. All faiths encourage people's healing, and the spiritual dimension of a person's life undoubtedly helps to better health. The media has a critical role to play in promoting health and maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

They have the ability to influence man through informing and recommending human health prevention measures. The information provided can be useful, but it can also be harmful. Today, the media in the modern world play an important role in various parts of our lives, including health. The media can affect all components of health. They can advise, motivate, and influence us to take care of our health, because the goal of every person is to heal, to be healthy. Healing, first and foremost, is becoming whole again, healed; it is a process through which one achieves bodily, mental, and spiritual completeness (Nikić 2010).

THE IMPORTANCE OF MEDIA

The word media comes from the Latin word *medius* which means middle, in the middle. The media are primarily a means of communication and transmission of news (Jurčić 2017). Let's begin by defining the term "media." The best definition is given by the Croatian Encyclopedia, which says that the mass media are: "a means for mass communication, collective name for communication media, mass media and institutions that affect a large number of readers, listeners and viewers." (Croatian encyclopedia 2005). Before all else, technical means of communication on a larger scale are used for the mass media. (Lever et al. 2002) The purpose of the media is to mediate the sending of a message from the sender to the receiving aspect of the communication sciences. Media are a technical and physical means of sending a message through channels, a means of transmitting information and communication (Anić & Goldstein 2000). The media are "means of social communication, also called channels or mass media, because they are institutions, public or private, whose purpose is to publish current information through physical and technical support provided by modern technology." (Morato 1996). The main source of information for today's man is are no longer newspapers, television and radio but the Internet. The media have the potential to enrich us, but it also has the potential to destroy us. It depends on how much we know them and how much we interact. Man is a being of communication, so he is open to another person. The media attracts a person, offers closeness, offers a feeling as if we are not alone, that we are not lonely. The relationship between man and the media is different than the relationship between two people. An individual hears and sees the media, but the media are unable to reciprocate. We are deceived when we enter close relationships with the media by watching and listening. In fact, we do this to avoid personal relationships, and we increasingly lack interpersonal connection which are replaced by the use of the Internet, television, and other media. In fact, the media allows an escape from reality (Košir et al. 1999). They have a task, and that is to inform, shape, educate and entertain

us. The mass media include books, press, film, television, radio, and the Internet. The medium in its first meaning is the mediator, the way in which communication is transmitted. A medium can be a person, but most often it comes in the form of material things (paper, radio waves, network, screen). The media shape our society and culture, through information. The most important means are movies, television, music, games, and the Internet. Marshall McLuhan, a great communication science theorist, emphasizes the importance of the media and the spoken word: "All media are active metaphors in their power to transform experience into new forms. The spoken word was the first technology by which man could free himself from his environment to understand it in a new way. A kind of retrieval of information that is able to capture the entire environment and experience at high speed" (McLuhan 2008). Messages sent through the media affect us, our families, communities and society. They use the language of persuasion, they want to convince us of something, such as news, ads, series. They want to achieve their goal using "persuasion" techniques. Nowadays, when technological progress is so developed, it also affects the development of mass media in the world. With the emergence of new media that have a great impact on individuals and the society (movies, comics, television, radio, Internet, network stations, applications, etc.). Computer technology has led to the emergence of new media such as the Internet. (Peruško 2011) The media, above all, have a role to play in informing and connecting us. In other words: "Media are at the same time social contents and frameworks within which symbolic exchanges take place among the subjects of society." (Fuček 2009).

THE IMPORTANCE OF HEALTH

In mutual verbal communication, we often talk about health, how to protect it, nurture it and take care of it. Health is an important segment of our lives. The World Health Organization (WHO) states that health is "a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or exhaustion" (World Health Organization Constitution 1946). While the declaration of the World Health Organization (WHO; 1974) complements the definition of health: "Health is not just the mere absence of disease, but a state of complete physical, mental, spiritual and social well-being." (Havelka 1990).

Health can be defined as: "A condition in which living beings find themselves when all their organs work smoothly and participate harmoniously in maintaining their integrity and ability to prolong life in the offspring." (Hrvatska enciklopedija 2009). The first international conference on health promotion in Ottawa, on November 21, 1986, adopted the Charter on

Health Promotion, and the importance of communication in promoting health. The document defines health promotion as: "A process that allows people to increase control over and improve their health." (Michienzi 2011). To achieve this it is necessary to create a favorable environment, make information available, develop personal skills and opportunities to make healthy decisions. As a die-hard connoisseur of life who has never lacked humor, Mark Twain once wrote - *the only way to stay healthy is to eat what you don't want, drink what you don't like and do what you'd rather not!* This short essay summarizes an almost complete recipe for a healthy life as proclaimed by modern medicine.

THE MEDIA IN THE SERVICE OF HEALTH

Today's man wants to preserve his health as well as possible and therefore seeks information that can be used for a healthy life. The mass media bring countless pieces of information every day. In our world, the media is the most important source of information when it comes to health and a healthy lifestyle. The media transmits information from the sender, people are the recipients of that information. Through new media, and above all the Internet, people have easier access to health information. In order to collect knowledge, it is necessary to know about health which source of knowledge is convincing and true. The information should be, above all, professional, and at the same time clear and simple. Every day we see various advertisements, shows, articles about health in all media: newspapers, television, radio and the Internet. In addition to a large amount of information, the media can often give contradictory information, so people do not know which information is correct. (Grčić et al. 2014)

Health is presented in the media in different ways and forms. First of all, the health education of the entire public. Through medical and health content, the public is informed about various campaigns, through various TV commercials, billboards, posters, newspaper ads, such as the battle against smoking, alcohol, prevention of various diseases, etc. The second part are health discoveries - the reach of medicine and the opinions of physicians and scientists, what is new in therapeutic techniques, in self-medication, various prevention. The third is medical and health information. This information is related to medical and health issues, presented in media spaces that are not explicitly dedicated to health: news on television or radio, news in daily newspapers, news on portals. Various news in various medical research, especially striking results (such as the discovery of early drugs), or some health hazards, but news with a predominantly indirect topic with health (a man sold his kidney because he is

unemployed, man healed in a special way, etc.) are not uncommon as well. Such information can fill the pages with daily news. It is possible that doctors and experts clash in different opinions. The fourth part is Indirect communication on the topic of health and care, it is a type of communication that has no informative goals and is not specifically dedicated to health issues. But that contributes to the concept of representation on which the discussion of health issues develops. This primarily refers to various films and commercials showing health professionals, doctors, medical staff. This refers to activities against various diseases. (Bucchi 2011)

MEDIA AND HEALTH COOPERATION

Cooperation between the media and health institutions is inevitable. All this is in the sign of improving human health. The media is always a support to health topics only if it can be presented in the best light: "If health topics are presented in the right way, they can get the support of the media. Journalists love when they can find themselves in a situation of discovering certain problems, but also finding solutions to problems. If things are set up that way, it is possible to get their cooperation." (Malekoci & Oletić 2007). The media have an important role to play in conveying the message of health and providing information about health, and their other role is to inform the public about the work of the health system and about doctors. For better communication and accurate health and health information, the European Health Communication Network has developed ten points for journalists: "1. Do not do any harm! Human rights and the good of the people are paramount. 2. Be professionally accurate. Check the facts and your sources, no matter the risk of not getting to finish the text on time. 3. Do not create any false hopes! Be especially careful when reporting a miracle cure or fearing possible health risks. 4. Ask yourself who benefits the most from a written story. 5. Always be sure that the text you want to publish is not the result of sponsorship or patronage. 6. Never reveal a confidential source. 7. Respect the privacy of the sick, disabled and their family members. 8. Be aware of the consequences of your story. Don't forget that patients, and especially children, will live well beyond its release. 9. Respect the feelings of victims, especially in accidents. Never film the victim or their family up close. 10. If in doubt, give up the story." (Pavleковиć 2007).

HEALTH INFORMATION

Health information is an important source for the care and treatment of people. Communication, in itself, can: increase knowledge and awareness of a health topic or problem and its solution, illustrate healthy behavior,

show the benefits that can be gained by changing behavior, support a health topic or intervention, increase demand for health services, but also support them. However, communication cannot compensate for poor health access or insufficient access to it, produce a lasting change in complex health behaviors without the support of broader programs that include strengthening health services and technologies, and changing standards and policies. Communication in health care is important, but today, in the age of the Internet, we are overwhelmed with a wealth of information, including that concerning health and disease. How to cope with that data forest, who to trust, how to recognize how serious the information is, etc., are questions to which there is no simple answer. Scientists of various profiles advise that when looking for some information about our health, you should first see the section about the author of the page and the article. If there is no such the site should be skipped. Misinformation can do us great harm to our health. You should choose verified health content websites where doctors and experts advise. A 2012 study conducted by the Italian research agency Censis (Centro Studi Investimenti Sociali) came to the data that after TV, scientific information travels most on the Internet. Indeed, television has always played a primary role in information, especially when it comes to medicine and healthcare. According to a Censis survey published on October 2, 2012, it is reported that Italians (59.7 percent) are well informed about health problems. The main sources of their knowledge are general practitioners (55.6 percent), Internet (10.8 percent), family and friends (10.1 percent), television (5.9 percent), specialist doctors (5.8 percent), pharmacist (4 percent) and print media (3.6 percent). About 32.4 percent of Italians use the Internet to obtain health data. Of these, 90.4 percent conduct research on specific pathologies, 58.6 percent seek physicians and contact facilities. (Censis 2012) Over time, the media's interest in health issues in a specific and in-depth way is growing due to the growing demand of citizens. The mainstream media is interested in informing the public about health, which aims to promote medical achievements and important topics about healthy living. (Lovari 2017) New media have a great impact on people's health, through various advertisements, campaigns they can sensitize society to health and a healthy lifestyle. In various segments, the media contribute to people's health, inform them about news in medical discoveries, new drugs, methods of treatment and bring them good medical advice. Therefore, it is necessary to educate the public in order for people to be able to use health information, and to use it in maintaining their health. Through such accurate medical information, people will go to the doctor less, use medication more correctly and use prevention in maintaining a healthy life, and the results of treatment will be far better.

PHYSICIANS AND THE MEDIA

Physicians need to communicate with media activities, journalists, to inform the public about health and the health care system. And that the information published in healthcare is credible and verified because the public has a right to know the truth. Media professionals should warn and publish accurate health and health information. Therefore, it is said that: "According to the description of their job, journalists are obliged to inform the public about everything, as well as about bad things that happen. This is exactly the task of journalists - to provide the patient with the right and verified information, as well as citizens have the right to choose whether they want to be treated by a certain doctor in a certain way." (Harapin 2005). When the media reports on health, they mostly show it in the news, especially when it comes to crime and courts. Journalists cover medical and health issues, and report on medical abuse or make new discoveries in that scientific field (Lovari 2017). Each medium, by its nature, is destined for some function. So, the press informs, television informs and entertains, radio mostly entertains, then informs and the like. The media today have a role to play in being a reliable social activity, which is an inseparable part of modern and contemporary life. Cooperation between journalists and health professionals should be at a professional level and should result in informing the public about the health and health activities of individuals, groups, and institutions. The advent of the Internet has made it possible for media content to become democratized and individualized. Also, the number of possible ways of communication (e-mail, web pages) has increased and the speed of information flow from the source to the recipient is significantly higher. However, with the introduction of the Internet, trust in the medium as a reliable source of information has gradually been lost (Jurčić 2017). A survey among doctors in 2016 conducted by the Croatian Medical Chamber showed that 95% of doctors think the media portrays them sensationally. Communication between doctors and the media is bad and relationships are disrupted, which also has a negative effect on patients who receive this information, but also on the quality of treatment. We need to work on the dialogue between doctors and the media, and certainly the health care system should be presented more objectively in the media. When we look at health more broadly, it is said that today everything is subject to profit, and health as the greatest value further encourages the pharmaceutical industry, insurance companies, large medical centers and all others closely related to human health, to convince humanity that only their products and services can help them achieve that value in their lives (Gašpar & Perković 2012). Just as journalists are in the service of man to connect us and convey the right news, so doctors in their task take care of human health.

Cooperation should be mutual. That is why communication is important in healthcare! It is public in itself: "It includes, for the sake of importance and complexity, all dimensions of the dialogical relationship between public administration and its public: it uses services, listening, prevention and care for the psychophysical well-being of citizens." Therefore, public communication allows various participants involved in public action to be interconnected in the same views and values, in order to work on better connectivity in order to strengthen the interests of the community in which they live (Porcu 2018).

THE MEDIA DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Nowadays when we look at health related media, they play a positive role in our lives. And that is to inform us about health and diseases, offer us the latest news in the field and they are essential for upbringing and education in the field. The other side of the media has a negative role, and this primarily refers to the spread of misinformation, the spread of false news, panic, fear and manipulation. The media should not spread false news or manipulate information without health and disease checks. This is dictated by media ethics. At this time, doctors and scientists need to be more present in the media to explain in an expert way the important things for our health. Care should be taken that the media do not become disseminators of false information. Media cooperation between scientists and health professionals should be serious and should be based on good intentions and trust.

The COVID-19 crisis has suddenly hit the whole world, with the media playing an important role in providing accurate information related to this disease. The EU Charter of Fundamental Rights in Article 11 states that: "Everyone has the right to freedom of expression. This right includes freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas without interference by public authority and regardless of frontiers. "Freedom and pluralism of the media are respected." (European Union Charter of Fundamental Rights 2016). Today, the media play a major role in transmitting information. When the COVID-19 appeared on November 17, 2019 there were also inaccurate information, spreading panic and fear through the media. In her research thesis *Media as a means of spreading panic - Analysis of the content of Internet portals in the case of the spread of coronavirus infection* at the University of Osijek, Anita Kovačević conducted an analysis of the content of Internet portals in the case of the spread of coronavirus infection, and came to the data: that readers of Internet portals recognize that they are being influenced and manipulated, as evidenced by the fact that as many as 70% of respondents believe that the media is contributing to the spread of panic over the

COVID-19 pandemic. That the media act on readers as a means of spreading panic and fear is also proven by the fact that as many as 70% of respondents experienced anxiety due to media reports." (Kovačević 2020). From this, the author visibly confirms through her research and results that the media audience believes that the media, especially Internet portals, contribute to spreading panic and fear to people. Thus, they affect human health.

It can also be seen from recent research that news of COVID-19 upsets people, causing fear due to the spread of the disease. One study (Marasinghe 2017) found that as many as 37% of kindergarten and school children are frightened and upset by listening to or watching the news on television. Research shows that at this time of COVID-19, more and more of the American population is logging in to social networks every day: Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc. They become addicted to social networks and have difficulty sleeping. They do not sleep enough due to a longer stay on social networks. Another study found that as many as 95% of people use the technology just before going to bed. All of this affects health. It is therefore recommended that people reduce listening to and watching the news about COVID-19, and that they listen to scientists and doctors and adhere to recommendations, hygiene and not allow fear to creep into them. We need to deal more with positive activities at this time. (Granić 2021) In May of 2021 at a meeting with the Bishop of Krk Ivica Petanjak, Croatian intellectuals showed that in this time of the COVID-19 crisis there are different opinions and critical judgments of the "COVID-19 phenomenon", and say that the WHO, state headquarters and governments of all countries through the state and global media have created and still they create an atmosphere of fear and panic to make it easier for people to be manipulated. In doing so, they select information by hiding and concealing some, others publish only filtered and distorted half-truths, and forbid others." (Diocese of Krk 2021). Regarding vaccines, American scientist Pamela Acker claims that vaccines produced in a short time are not very safe. Vaccines have been produced in less than a year without any systematic verification. A number of adverse side effects have been reported in trial vaccination. The short time of vaccine development leads to vaccines becoming unreliable. Vaccine manufacturers themselves are protected from liability because they have asked legislators not to be liable in the event that vaccines are shown to be harmful. In the world of concern about the acceleration of vaccine production, there is ample evidence that it may be particularly difficult to develop a vaccine for COVID-19. The claim about the guaranteed success of the vaccine is inflated. And that is why the real science in the case of the development of a vaccine for COVID-19 is very much ignored, and such a vaccine that was produced in less than a year is presented as effective in preventing the virus, and without

major side effects. (Acker 2021) Various research and opinions have shown that during the pandemic, the use and monitoring of the media increased, but that trust in the media declined. Some believe that the media did not play that important role in information and research, but that they were biased, and that they had a negative impact on the health of children, young people and the elderly. Arguments and journalistic research and a true approach to information were missing. The media put a lot of pressure on people to get vaccinated when it came to vaccinating against COVID-19, and even called on some prominent people from social life to advertise the vaccination. All major media outlets are in the service of promoting vaccination and possession of COVID-19 passports. Unfortunately, from the very beginning of the appearance of COVID-19, there was an onslaught of misinformation aimed at the public about the pandemic. Thus, on the 30th of April, the German Ministry of Health published a description of the situation in hospitals in 2020, to which the mass media generally did not pay attention. In that report, the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Germany, using data from the study of the Initiative for Quality Medicine, where it is said that in the first half of 2020 there were fewer respiratory infections along with Corona than in the same period in 2019. In addition, there were strange data that the "victims of COVID-19" are considered to be both those who died "from COVID-19" and those who died "with COVID-19". To make matters even weirder, people who died 10 weeks after the infection are also considered "victims of COVID-19". (Bojić 2021) The media seemed to be the ones who spread a lot of misinformation and manipulation. So, in their daily newscasts the main news was about COVID-19. They immediately went with the numbers, namely the number of people tested, ill, hospitalized, on respirators and the number of deaths from COVID-19. There was no mention of the number of cured, uninfected and survivors. So, it was about intimidating people and spreading panic. The media seems to have played the wrong role in this period of the pandemic and were in the service of media house owners and large corporations. There were no arguments and facts, you could not say your opinion, everything was subject to censorship and blockades in the media space. It was not about getting scientists involved and being the ones to give us the right expert information. They seem to have been silenced and the media has played a very dirty game. The game is not ethical and biased. According to their ethics, the media should remain in the service of information and human health.

CONCLUSION

It is certain that the media and health go together. Health and systemic health care are present in the media. The media have important roles to inform and

educate us about health and its system. Viewed today, the media play their role differently in the communication process, in the relationship between "sender" and "recipient" of messages. The media themselves have good and bad characteristics because they are just means of informing us. In the modern world, the media not only inform us, but also state the sources and truthfulness of the news. Ethics plays an important role in the media. As today's media are increasingly privatized, this also affects the choice of topics that media workers deal with. Today, fake news, crime and court, and sensations are more and more present. The media should be helpful to health professionals in their actions. First, this refers to the fact that when it comes to health information, it should be presented professionally and ethically. There is a great need for doctors to be present in the media and to participate in various shows from the professional point of view. The media and healthcare should always work together. Health care has the task of informing the public about new achievements in medicine, about their obligations and rights, and people should be educated about health. The media also has the task of conveying information truthfully, professionally, ethically, and simply. The media and healthcare should continue their continuous cooperation with respect and professionalism. Because the media has the power to shape public opinion. At the time of the pandemic of COVID-19 research has shown that the media also contributes to the negative impact on human health. The media acts on people as spreaders of fear and panic related to Corona virus. The media should be used to promote health in the environment in which one lives. Media communication in healthcare is essential.

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