

Communication of health topics in Croatian online media: 2003-2023

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The media plays a crucial role in promoting health and health-related topics, as demonstrated by the COVID-19 pandemic and the emergence of the infodemic. This raises the question of how the media have reported on health in the last two decades. In this context, the aim of this study was to analyze the reporting of health-related topics in Croatian online media, specifically index.hr, tportal.hr, jutarnji.hr, and 24sata.hr. Using the platform retriever.takelab.fer.hr with the keyword “zdravlje” (health in Croatian), 1765 publications were analyzed from 2003 to 2023. The research results demonstrated that the media predominantly used secondary sources, with a prominent presence of Western media and experts. Nutrition emerged as the predominant topic, exhibiting consistent growth in coverage. Contrarily, there were comparatively fewer articles addressing issues such as infectious diseases, addictions, and dementia. Additionally, the research revealed that clickbait-style headlines are significantly more prevalent than those that inform readers. These headlines are designed to capture attention and elicit emotional responses, frequently at the expense of informativeness. This research attempts to raise awareness of the dual challenges of media ignorance and the lack of proactive involvement of health experts in shaping health communication.

Keywords: media literacy; health; online media; health coverage; reporting analysis; health communication; health promotion