

COMMUNICATING CORONA: DISSEMINATING THE RIGHT INFORMATION IN A PANDEMIC STRICKEN WORLD

A Webinar
Conducted On
29th May 2020
With



Dr. Bhrigu Kapuria
Health Specialist (Immunization)
UNICEF India



Ms. Monica Chaturvedi
Health Communication
Professional



Mr. Pervaiz Alam
Consultant, Special Projects,
India Today Group



Mr. Ajai Kumar S.
Team Lead Strategic Communications
Immunization Technical Support Unit
(ITSU-JSI)



MODERATED BY-
Mr. Devang Chaturvedi - Assistant
Professor, ASCO,
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Discussion on 'Health Risk Communication in the Times of Covid-19: Role of Communication Schools in Combating Health Crises'

On 29th May 2020, Amity School of Communication (ASCO) conducted a webinar for the faculty and students on the topic, 'Health Risk Communication in the Times of Covid-19: Role of Communication Schools in Combating Health Crises'. The webinar was headed by guest lecturers, Mr. Pervaiz Alam, Consultant, Special Projects at Aaj Tak Radio and India Today Group; Dr. Bhrigu Kapuri, Health Specialist (Immunization) - UNICEF India; Mr. Ajai S Kumar, Team Lead of Strategic Communications Immunization Technical Support Unit (ITSU-JSI), and Ms. Monica Chaturvedi, Health Communication Professional. It was moderated by Mr. Devang Chaturvedi, Assistant Professor at ASCO.

Due to the sudden rise in health complications owing to the global pandemic of COVID-19, it is a necessary move to discuss and analyze the current situation that the world is going through. Not only the present, but it is also imperative that discussions take place about the future of a 'post-corona' world, about the measures we need to take to prevent something like this from happening again. Thus, the webinar on Health Communication is important because, in any crisis, the first move of a country should be to make people aware of the implications of it and what better than utilizing the time to educate communication students who are budding journalists and advertisers and the future of media and communications.

All of the speakers were from backgrounds that detailed their experience in handling health crises such as HIV/AIDS and how they tackled misinformation through widespread communication. Dr. Kapuri, who has previously held portfolios in World Health Organization (WHO), Immunization Technical Support Unit (ITSU) PHFI, National AIDS Control Organization (NACO), etc. in varying capacity, and within the immunization domain, has extensively worked on coverage and equity aspects of immunization, vaccine logistics and cold chain, new vaccine introduction, measles elimination and other domains of health system strengthening, spoke about the how coronavirus is a threat to humanity due to its mutation.

capabilities due to which vaccines and the creation of new ones is proving to be difficult in the health sector. He said that if not for lockdown, the death toll would have been globally more severe. Mr. Ajai S Kumar, an advocacy and development communications professional with 21 years of experience spanning several domains including gender, water and sanitation, public health, crop insurance and rural development, among others and Ms. Monica Chaturvedi, accomplished public health communication professional with over 20 years of progressive experience spanning across formative research, evaluation, capacity building on vaccine risk communication, entertainment education telenovela and multimedia campaigns, etc., discussed the roles of both traditional and new media in helping make people aware about future health risks such as the current scenario of COVID-19. They discussed the importance of spreading the right information and in the right way so that the panic frenzy among the public can be controlled. Speaking from his experience as a BBC radio and All India Radio executive producer and thus, taking the discussion forward, Mr. Pervaiz Alam, put forward his inputs on the importance of dissemination of the right information to curb the spread of fake news and create an atmosphere of fear and frenzy. The guest lecturers educated the students and the faculty about the importance of communicators and their role in interacting with the public to make everyone feel safe and prepare them for the pandemic.

Moderating the lecture, Mr. Devang Chaturvedi, a former business journalist and current professor at Amity School of Communication, also put forward his interpretation of the current scenario, how the media is handling it and how current media students can learn from their present to be better in the future. The question-answer session between the moderator and the guest lecturers added fuel to the fire and made the discussion livelier, engaging as well as educative. From the department of ASCO, we thank the guest speakers for taking out time from their busy schedules and grace the webinar with their wisdom and knowledge.

