Overview of presentation

The presentation begins with a brief introduction to the three main kinds of risk communication, and an introduction to how normal people perceive risk – some overlap with yesterday’s presentation.

Most of today’s presentation focuses on Crisis Communication.

Tomorrow’s presentation (on a separate Slide presentation) will focus on media skills for delivering messages using the principles and strategies introduced today and earlier in the workshop.

Lectures will alternate with exercises. Please ask questions / make comments at any time.
Please feel free to copy and share these slides with others in your Department, or with other Departments.

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Please feel VERY free to adapt the slides for training purposes, adding a note “Adapted by [your name or agency] from slides by Jody Lanard.”

Please delete any slides you do not wish to use. Please add any examples or other material, with a note stating the author of the new slide.

Sign in a Sichuan hospital which responded within minutes to the devastating earthquake in 2008.
Common sense in matters medical is rare, and is usually in inverse ratio to the degree of education.

A novel Swine Flu virus: Example of unusual risk communication

The following five slides are consecutive excerpts from the U.S. CDC’s April 24, 2009 announcement that the Mexican swine flu cases were caused by the same virus as the unusual human swine flu cases found in the U.S.

We will briefly analyze them before the training, and in more depth after the training.
Before I talk about the cases and specific actions, I want to recognize some initial guiding concepts. First I want to recognize that people are concerned about this situation. We hear from the public and from others about their concern, and we are worried, as well. Our concern has grown since yesterday in light of what we’ve learned since then.”

Complete transcript at:

“I want to acknowledge the importance of uncertainty. At the early stages of an outbreak, there’s much uncertainty, and probably more than everyone would like. Our guidelines and advice our likely to be interim and fluid, subject to change as we learn more. We’re moving quickly to learn as much as possible and working with many local state and international partners to do so.”
Quiz (Slide 3 of 5): Announcing the Mexico outbreak is indeed Swine Flu, April 24 2009

“I want to recognize that while we’re moving fast, it’s very likely that this will be more of a marathon than a sprint. I want to acknowledge change. Our recommendations, advice, approaches will likely change as we learn more about the virus and we learn more about its transmission.”

Quiz (Slide 4 of 5): Announcing the Mexico outbreak

“I want to acknowledge that we’re likely to see local approaches to controlling the spread of this virus, and that’s important; that can be beneficial; that can teach us things that we want to use in other parts of the country and that other people in other places may find useful.”
Quiz (Slide 5 of 5): Announcing the Mexico outbreak

“Because things are changing, because flu viruses are unpredictable and because there will be local adaptation, it’s likely that any given moment there will be confusing – or may be confusing or conflicting information available. We are very committed to minimizing and that where we find that, clearing up any of that misconception.”

Risk Communication Paradigms

- **Watch out!!**  
  *(precaution advocacy)*

- **Calm down!!**  
  *(outrage and fear management)*

- **We’ll get through this together.**  
  *(crisis communication)*
What “risk communication” is not:

- “Educating the public”
- One-way communication
- Talking to people who have no pre-existing views
- Information you give out after you have made all your plans.

Risk: a traditional definition

The multiplication of

Magnitude x Probability.

How likely to happen?

How bad if it happens?
Risk Perception: How normal people perceive risks

Outrage (and fear) Factors How normal people assess most hazards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>&quot;safe&quot;</th>
<th>&quot;risky&quot;</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Natural</td>
<td>Industrial</td>
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<tr>
<td>Voluntary</td>
<td>Involuntary</td>
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<tr>
<td>Controlled by self</td>
<td>Controlled by others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trustworthy sources</td>
<td>Untrustworthy sources</td>
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<tr>
<td>Responsive process</td>
<td>Unresponsive process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Familiar</td>
<td>Unfamiliar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not memorable</td>
<td>Memorable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No moral relevance</td>
<td>Moral relevance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not dreaded</td>
<td>Dreaded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chronic</td>
<td>Catastrophic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Peter Sandman 1987, 2006 (Based on the risk perception work of Paul Slovic)
A new definition of risk:

Risk

Hazard
A new definition of risk:

Risk = Hazard + Outrage

(Peter Sandman’s formula!)
For technical people:

Risk = f( H, O )

A new “definition” of risk:

Risk = Hazard + Outrage

(Peter Sandman’s formula!)
What is the direction of causality?

Does Hazard perception drive outrage?

Does Outrage drive hazard perception?

Answer: arrows go both ways, but --
First communication planning task:
Diagnose which “communication environments” are relevant.

Four Kinds of Risk Communication
When people are ignoring a serious hazard: High hazard, Low outrage.
Warning: next comes a concept that generates enormous resistance:

"Precaution Advocacy"

In other words...

"Precaution Advocacy"
For many of our online articles and handouts on Precaution Advocacy

See the Precaution Advocacy Index of our website at:
http://www.psandman.com/indxprec.htm

Four Kinds of Risk Communication

HAZARD

OUTRAGE MANAGEMENT

Outrage Or Fear

“Precaution Advocacy”

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Four Kinds of Risk Communication

Your Job: Inform people AND use outrage/fear management strategies to reduce their outrage or fear.

In other words...

Copyright © 2003 Peter Sandman
Outrage after the 2004 tsunami

Aceh, Indonesia

http://img.scoop.co.nz/stories/images/0412/a98b7ec74db0ba925302.jpeg

Looking for someone to blame about the schools that collapsed in the Sichuan earthquake:
For many of our online articles and handouts on Outrage Management

See the Outrage Management Index of our website at:

www.psandman.com/indxoutr.htm

Four Kinds of Risk Communication

OUTRAGE MANAGEMENT

“Precaution Advocacy”
Four Kinds of Risk Communication

HAZARD

OUTRAGE

OUTRAGE MANAGEMENT

CRISIS COMMUNICATION

“Precaution Advocacy”

OUTRAGE or FEAR MANAGEMENT

“Precaution Advocacy”
Four Kinds of Risk Communication

“We’ll get through this together”

Crisis Communication

HAZARD

HAZARD

Outrage

Outrage

For many of our online articles and handouts on Crisis Communication

See the Crisis Communication Index of our website at:

www.psandman.com/terror.htm
Quick quiz: What kind of risk communication should you do?

- Persuading motor-bike riders to wear helmets.
Quiz: What kind of risk communication should you do?

- Explaining that properly-cooked poultry or pork doesn’t spread bird flu or swine flu?

- Evacuating a coastal village when a typhoon is about to come ashore.

- Hint: At least two kinds of risk communication may be needed!
Quiz: What kind of risk communication should you do?

- After published rumors that there is a large watery diarrhea outbreak:
  
  Admitting that your Ministry has known for several days that some of the diarrhea patients tested positive for cholera.

Who Outbreak Communication Guidelines – proposed:

- Trust
- Announcing early
- Transparency
- [Involving] The public
- Planning
- Admit and apologize for errors
Who Outbreak Communication Guidelines – final:

- Trust
- Announcing early
- Transparency
- [Involving] The public
- Planning

Second exercise: Brief group work

- List some issues in your work that would need specific types of risk communication, or combinations of risk communication.
- Goal of exercise: Identify actual risk communication issues and “diagnose” what type (or types) of risk communication should be used.
- List as many issues as you can!
- The issues can be current issues, past issues, and issues you can anticipate in the future.
Who Outbreak Communication Guidelines

- Announcing early

How bad is it? How sure are you?

1. Don't over-reassure.
Bad example: Premature overconfident over-reassurance:

"I am glad to reassure the people of New York and Washington, D.C. that their air is safe to breathe and their water is safe to drink."

– U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Director Whitman, September 18, 2001

Reaction to bad example:

Judge Blasts Ex-EPA Chief For

“for reassuring Manhattan residents that the environment was safe to return to homes and offices while toxic dust was polluting the neighborhood.”

— NBC News, February 2006
Normal view of U.S. at night, from outer space
New York Blackout, 2003
“Is it terrorism?”

“The first radio reports reassured everyone that it was not an act of terrorism.”

— Leah Singer, blogger

“People are a little scared and seem on edge. I don't hear the word terrorism, but the air is thick with the thought.”

— Jason Kottke, blogger

Bad example: (premature reassurance)
Mayor Bloomberg, early in the NY blackout of 2003

“I can tell you 100 percent sure that there is no evidence as of this moment whatsoever of any terrorism.”

NY Mayor Michael Bloomberg talking to CNN anchor Kyra Phillips, 7:41 p.m., August 14, 2003
Quiz:

- What words “protect” him if he turns out wrong?

Answer:

“...as of this moment...”
What words did CNN run as a caption, while the Mayor spoke?

“????????”

For about ten minutes, CNN ran the words:

“100% sure”
How bad is it? How sure are you?

1. Don't over-reassure.
2. Put reassuring information in subordinate clauses.
Good example: Singapore “subordinates” the good news

"The WHO said the [SARS] peak is over in Singapore, but our minister has said it is too early to tell."
Good example:  Malaysia “subordinates” the good news

Veterinary Services DG Datuk Dr. Hawari Hussein: Malaysia was eligible to be declared "bird flu free," after no new cases were detected for 21 days.

But he added: health authorities were doing extra tests "to be absolutely sure... The threat is still there, from neighbouring countries. The tests are part of our own initiative to be sure."

(adapted from the Star on line, November 16 2004: Malaysia set to be declared free of bird flu)

Good example:  Headline: "Hepatitis outbreak in Beaver County running out of gas; State officials still won’t say danger has passed."

“State officials aren’t ready to say the nation’s worst hepatitis A outbreak is tapering off, but the numbers were doing the talking yesterday, as 10 new cases brought the total to 530.”

— headline and text, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, Nov 20, 2003, during the worst single-source Hepatitis A outbreak in U.S. history.
Good example: U.S. CDC Director Julie Gerberding “subordinates” the good news

When asked if there was community transmission of SARS, Dr. Gerberding said:

"Even though there is no sign of community spread, we are continuing intense surveillance and we're not out of the woods yet."

When asked if SARS could possibly be due to terrorism, Dr. Gerberding said:

“Although this virus appears to be of entirely natural origin, we are being vigilant about all possibilities."
One day, when there was very little important SARS news ...

“Is SARS From Outer Space?”
–CNN headline, May 23, 2003

Photo from: http://pardonbakarmisiniz.wordpress.com/files/2006/08/meteor-shower.jpg
Good example: U.S. CDC Director Julie Gerberding “subordinates” the good news

"Even though there is no evidence that SARS comes from outer space, we're keeping an open mind.”

-- Dr. Julie Gerberding, U.S. CDC

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Exercise: Convert “typical” risk communication into “good” risk communication
Typical Examples:

Very early in the SARS outbreaks in 2003:

When a mysterious respiratory disease was spreading in Hong Kong hospitals in 2003, Health Secretary E.K. Yeoh said:

“Hong Kong is absolutely safe, and no different from any other big city in the world. Hong Kong does not have an outbreak, okay?”

Typical Examples:

Two hours after a massive power blackout in New York City in 2003, the Mayor said:

“I can tell you 100 percent sure that there is no evidence as of this moment whatsoever of any terrorism.”
1. Don't over-reassure.
2. Put reassuring information in subordinate clauses.
3. Err on the alarming side.

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Good example: Early on in SARS, WHO’s Dick Thompson errs on the alarming side.

"one might think we are overreacting to the [few] cases. But when you do not know the cause, when it strikes hospital staff, and it certainly is moving at the speed of a jet, we are taking this very seriously."

--From the risk communication Good Example file. (Don't aim for zero fear; err on the alarming side; acknowledge people's starting beliefs – their “anchoring frames”)

Who Outbreak Communication Guidelines

- Trust
- Announcing early
- Transparency
4. Acknowledge uncertainty.

Good example:
Warning people about uncertainty

“We will learn things in the coming weeks that everyone will wish we had known when we started.”

This became the U.S. CDC’s mantra after its early communication mistakes during the anthrax poisonings.
4. Acknowledge uncertainty.

Good example: Thailand

When the first Thai bird flu outbreaks subsided in 2004, a senior public official said: “The first wave of bird flu outbreak has passed ... but we don’t know when the second wave will come, and we don’t trust the situation.... So the Public Health Ministry is being as careful as possible.”

Good example of what?
Good example: Thailand
When the first Thai bird flu outbreaks subsided in 2004, a senior public official said: “The first wave of bird flu outbreak has passed ... but we don’t know when the second wave will come, and we don’t trust the situation.... So the Public Health Ministry is being as careful as possible.”

--acknowledge uncertainty
--don’t overreassure

Good example: Malaysia
During Malaysia’s first bird flu outbreak tests were pending regarding what strain of flu was killing the chickens.

Senior veterinary official Hawari Hussein said, “We know it is H5, but we’re hoping it won’t be H5N1.”

--Announces preliminary results EARLY
--Acknowledges uncertainty
--Expresses wishes, another good crisis communication practice. Everyone shared Hussein’s hope, but feared the worst.
What kinds of statements did other countries make, while investigating possible avian influenza outbreaks?

Day 1 announcement, infected poultry in live bird market in New Jersey, where I live:

“We have found signs of avian influenza in the Camden bird market, but it is not N1.”

...Not N1?

...How long have they known it was AI?
...Did they alter any biosecurity practices and poultry movements during while final lab tests were pending?
Day 1 announcement in response to AI rumors in an Asian country

“There is no reason to speculate that it is avian influenza. It is probably fowl cholera or Newcastle’s disease.”

(It did turn out to be avian influenza. Again, no early warnings were given to farmers and traders to reduce the risk of spread.)

Quiz:
Day One of rumors about atypical pneumonia among health care workers

Typical official statement: “The situation is under control. There is no need to panic.”

You have studied risk communication. What do you advise the official to say?
Short exercise:
Day 1, atypical pneumonia rumors

(Strategy: Don’t over-reassure: Put the reassuring information at the start, end on a note of caution.)
Good example: Warning people about uncertainty

“We will learn things in the coming weeks that everyone will wish we had known when we started.”

This became the U.S. CDC’s mantra after its early communication mistakes during the anthrax poisonings.

Good example: Uncertainty about origin of Korean poultry outbreaks

After a third bird flu outbreak in December 2006, a few kilometers outside the initial “disinfection zone”, a reporter wrote:

“all the three cities... where the bird flu broke out are adjacent to National Highway No. 23, so some suspect the disease is spreading along the road... It may have been spread by cars or personnel mobilized for the quarantine measures.”
4. Acknowledge uncertainty.
5. Share dilemmas.

Good example: Minister Tony Abbott shares pandemic planning dilemmas

"Of course, it’s impossible to say if, when and how a pandemic might develop. The next pandemic might be comparatively mild like the flu outbreaks of the late 50s and 60s. But it could also be a worldwide biological version of the Indian Ocean Tsunami. There are obvious limits to how much governments can invest in preparations for hypothetical events, however serious."

--from a May 2005 speech by Australia Minister of Health Tony Abbott
4. Acknowledge uncertainty.
5. Share dilemmas.
6. Acknowledge opinion diversity

Help the public learn that not all decisions are unanimous.

Show that you can bear these differences within and between agencies, so they do not appear to be alarming fractures in your ability to cope with the crisis.

Message consistency is still the ideal, but only if it reflects genuine unanimity. Message diversity is not harmful unless officials seem unaware of discrepancies or contemptuous of what other officials are saying.
SARS in Singapore: To close the schools? Or not?

In the middle of the SARS crisis, the Singapore government told the public about internal disagreements about whether to close the schools...

Osterholm warning about meningitis

During the 2001 U.S. anthrax poisonings, Michael Osterholm talked about the importance of telling people what to expect. Here is an excerpt from the October 28, 2001, New York Times.
“The explanations have to include bad news along with the good, said Michael Osterholm.... Mr. Osterholm said he gained hard experience during a 1995 outbreak of meningitis in Mankato, Minn., where he oversaw vaccinations for 30,000 residents in just four days.” (N.Y. Times)

At the outset he was careful to warn townspeople that one out of seven people who were infected would probably die. Less than a week into the outbreak, a patient died; the news, he said, was accepted without "fueling the fire," because "people had anticipated it could happen.

4. Acknowledge uncertainty.
5. Share dilemmas.
6. Acknowledge opinion diversity
7. Be willing to speculate.

7. Be willing to speculate – responsibly

Refusing to speculate is better than speculating over-confidently and over-optimistically.

But in a crisis you can’t just say you’ll have a report out next month; the information vacuum demands to be filled now.

So take the risk of being misquoted or turning out wrong, and speculate ... but always tentatively, and with due focus on the worst case.
Coping with the emotional side of the crisis

8. Don't overdiagnose or overplan for panic.

Panic is a relatively rare (though extremely damaging) response to crisis. Efforts to avoid panic — for example, by withholding bad news and making over-reassuring statements — can actually make panic likelier instead. Do not mistake tolerable levels of fear or disobedient precaution-taking for panic.

"Panic" in Boracay fire? Not.

A few years ago, there was a fire at a cottage resort at Boracay, a famous vacation spot in the Philippines.

People fled the fire. **News reports:**

"Foreigners were seen helping mostly local tourists carry their baggages to safe spots."

"no one was reported injured or killed."
“Panic” in Boracay fire? Not.
"no one was reported injured or killed,"

but the same reporter said the fire sent
"hundreds of tourists in panic."

And said that the incident
"caused panic not only to the residents..., but especially to local and foreign tourists. People flee in different directions looking for a place where they will be safe."

Panic in Baseco shanty town fire?
"Residents were screaming and running in the streets in panic to save their lives and their families. The firefighters arrived at the scene, but could not immediately control the fire because of the chaotic situation."
Panic in Baseco barangay fire?

In the next sentence, the author notes the huge amount of physical damage to buildings housing 15,100 people, observing that there were also 49 injuries but no fatalities.

49 injuries, no deaths – out of 15,100 !!

Almost by definition, the self-rescue was effective.

The residents knew their way around the alleys better than the incoming fire fighters, and got everyone out with only a few injuries and no deaths.

Undoubtedly it looked chaotic to the fire fighters. What is typical is the assumption on the part of the officials that the behaviour was panic – despite the fact that it was part of an effective and successful self-organized rescue operation.
Coping with the emotional side of the crisis

8. Don't overdiagnose or overplan for panic.
9. Don't aim for zero fear.
Coping with the emotional side of the crisis

9. Don't aim for zero fear.

What is the “right” level of fear?

- PANIC
- TERROR
- FEAR
- CONCERN
- INTEREST
- APATHY
- DENIAL
What is the “right” level of fear?

Sometimes, a degree of rational fear is appropriate!
Coping with the emotional side of the crisis

9. Don't aim for zero fear.

WHO/PAHO Pan Flu Communication example: draft versus final

Draft:
“To respond to rumors and inaccuracies to minimize concern, disruption and stigmatization.”

Final:
“It is important to proactively address reports that will create misplaced fear or unrealistic expectations.”
Coping with the emotional side of the crisis

8. Don't overdiagnose or overplan for panic.
9. Don't aim for zero fear.
10. Don't forget other emotions (besides fear).

Emotional Responses to Crisis

1. Fear
2. Empathy/Misery
3. Anger
4. Hurt
5. Guilt
6. Resilience!

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11. Don't ridicule the public's emotions.
Coping with the emotional side of the crisis

11. Don't ridicule the public's emotions.
12. Legitimize people's fears.

Good example from SARS: Singapore's Prime Minister validates fear — and courage

“Our health-care workers put their lives at risk every day they went to work... 'They were frightened. But they conquered their fear with courage. Courage in tending to an infected patient. Courage in taking respiratory fluid samples from the throat. Courage in cleaning the wards every night.

“We saw this courage in our doctors, nurses and other health-care professionals; in the attendants, security officers and cleaners in our hospitals.” — Prime Minister Goh, at SARS Memorial Ceremony, July 23, 2003. Straits Times
Good example: Dr. Jeff Engel answers a reporter about whether he is stirring up too much fear.

"We need to involve our community in all aspects of public health. Certainly a disease like SARS, so new, so frightening, should instill fear. Fear is an appropriate response -- for me as a public health physician, for everyone in the community.

“We need to transfer that fear into positive energy, and keep the facts out in front of hysteria.... I think [the media's] response is appropriate. This is a new disease, it spreads person to person, it can kill, it has a high case-fatality rate. That is newsworthy!"

---

June 2003, when North Carolina had its first confirmed SARS case.

Good example: Singapore Prime Minister Goh validates SARS fear

"For me, the most appropriate coinage for SARS was 'Singaporeans Are Really Scared'. Yes, we were really scared. Scared for our lives and our loved ones. Scared of taking a taxi, scared of going to the hospital. Scared that tourists and customers would not return, and we might lose our jobs.

“For the first time in our history, all Singaporeans felt the same fear at the same time. But far from being frozen by the fear, the entire nation sprang into action.”
11. Don't ridicule the public's emotions.
12. Legitimize people's fears.
13. Tolerate early over-reactions.

Bad example: Ridiculing the public, when bird flu came to Italy:

“There is no reason to change eating and behavioural habits.... There’s no need for chicken psychosis... This psychosis is not justified.”

--Former Italian Health Minister Storace, when Italy had its first bird flu outbreak
Adjustment Reactions --

-- the Teachable Moment in crisis communications!

You can harness and channel it,

Or you can waste the opportunity!

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Tolerate Early Over-reactions:
Use the “Teachable Moment”

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Good example: Bulgaria validates fear

"It is not necessary to start culling domestic birds ... (but) we have to accept the thought that in the coming days we might have the first outbreak.

The probability of that is very high and we have to be ready for pictures of veterinarians going into those areas with special suits to cull birds." (Reuters)

Acknowledge that culling is gross

Culling:
Acknowledge that culling is gross
Health officials carry sacks containing chickens slaughtered in Iksan, south of Seoul, Korea Thursday, November 30, 2006. (AP Photo)
Bad example: Are we hungry yet?

State agriculture officials staged photo ops
From http://birdflubook.com/a.php?id=79

Former PM Thaksin over-reassures
... by eating chicken
Good example: What the Republic of Lao Health Minister did instead of a chicken-eating party:

- The Nation Newspaper, Bangkok
- 16 January 2004
- from a WHO/Thai risk comm presentation by WHO communication officer in Thailand
Good example: What the Republic of Lao Health Minister did instead of a chicken-eating party:

Clean
Cook thoroughly
Chill, Avoid Cross-contamination

Good example:
Lao showed concern for people’s health

While most governments demonstrated concern for trade and industry, the Republic of Lao showed its Ministers in the kitchen of a restaurant, learning how workers protect themselves while preparing poultry.

They showed concern for people’s health.
This builds trust with the public.
Wonderful example: Nigeria validates the adjustment reaction, and tells people what to expect:

"However, we have observed that in other countries experiencing their first human H5N1 cases, there has been widespread fear of poultry and poultry products, with a ...drop in consumption and sales.

“For a short time, that may happen in Nigeria too. It is entirely understandable that the population may be overly worried about all chickens, not just sick chickens.”

--Information Minister Frank Nweke, February 2007

China Daily, December 12, 2007:

The possibilities of regional bird flu outbreaks were "very high" in the winter and coming spring, said Vice Minister of Agriculture Yin Chengjie on Monday.

VERY GOOD EXAMPLE OF:
--DON'T OVER-REASSURE
--TELL PEOPLE WHAT TO EXPECT
--SPECULATE RESPONSIBLY
--AIM FOR CANDOR"
Coping with the emotional side of the crisis

Final story to illustrate these strategies:

11. Don't ridicule the public's emotions.

12. Legitimize people's fears.

13. Tolerate early over-reactions.

Involving the public

16. Offer people things to do.
Involving the public

16. Offer people things to do.
17. Let people choose their own actions.

Singapore’s Dr. Balaji’s gold standard risk communication:

A SARS mask story illustrates three difficult outbreak communication strategies:

- acknowledging uncertainty,
- sharing dilemmas, and
- letting people choose their own actions:
Involving the public

16 Offer people things to do.
17. Let people choose their own actions.
18. Ask more of people.

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Singapore shares emotions about SARS

SARS commemoration ceremony, Singapore, Summer 2003
[The Straits Times]
“Heroes and Angels / Through Your Eyes” – the SARS anthem, Singapore
"Heroes and Angels / Through Your Eyes" – the SARS anthem, Singapore

Overwhelmed by emotion, a nurse sheds a tear as she watches a patient suffering from SARS. http://www.wpro.who.int/sites/whd/heroes/singapore/pic10.htm

"Heroes and Angels / Through Your Eyes" – the SARS anthem, Singapore
19. Acknowledge errors, deficiencies, and misbehaviors.

Good example: Singapore acknowledges error

In mid-May, 2003, there was an unexpected potential new outbreak of SARS at a Singapore mental hospital. Before this turned out to be a false alarm, the Singapore Straits Times wrote: 'SARS Combat Unit Chief Khaw Boon Wan...admitted that the fresh batch of possible cases at the Institute of Mental Health had caught him unprepared. The chronic-care hospital 'was not on my radar screen,' [he] confessed, 'because we just didn't have the time to focus on it. It was a tactical error.'
19. Acknowledge errors, deficiencies, and misbehaviors.
20. Apologize often for errors, deficiencies, and misbehaviors.

21. Be explicit about "anchoring frames*."

*what people already know and believe; their “mental models.”
Suppose…

You want parents to use child car seats.

You found out Hispanic parents are particularly resistant.

Why?

From Dr. Wm. Smith, Academy for Educational Development, slides online at: http://www.izcoalitionsta.org/content.cfm?id=514

My child is always safest in my arms. God decides when to take my baby.

From Dr. Wm. Smith, Academy for Educational Development, slides online at: http://www.izcoalitionsta.org/content.cfm?id=514
Have a priest bless the car seats.

From Dr. Wm. Smith, Academy for Educational Development, slides online at:
http://www.izcoalitionsta.org/content.cfm?id=514

21. Be explicit about "anchoring frames."
22. Be explicit about changes in official opinion, prediction, or policy.

Acknowledge Errors, Misimpressions, and Half-truths

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Acknowledge Errors, Misimpressions, and Half-truths

23. Don't lie, and don't tell half-truths.

Who Outbreak Communication Guidelines

- Trust
- Transparency
Thailand plays ostrich, Dec 18 2003

The Livestock Development Department maintains that a disease outbreak that killed many chickens in two provinces was not the highly infectious bird flu.

The department's director-general issued the clarification yesterday after Japan, Poland and Malaysia expressed concerns about the safety of Thai chicken shipments.

He said the chickens died from a bacteria named pastuerella multocida Type A.


Farmer suspects a cover-up involved

Says chickens died of flu, not cholera

-Bangkok Post, 17 January 2004

From a WHO/Thai risk comm presentation
“As public servants, they (the authorities) should be ashamed of themselves for failing to perform their duties in a straight forward manner.”

-The Nation Newspaper, 25 January 2004

-From a WHO/Thai risk comm presentation by a WHO communication officer.


Acknowledge Errors, Misimpressions, and Half-truths
Who Outbreak Communication Guidelines

- Trust
- Announcing early
- Transparency
- The public
- Planning

Who Outbreak Communication Guidelines

- Trust (strategies from this workshop)
  - Don't over-reassure.
  - Share dilemmas.
  - Acknowledge opinion diversity.
  - Tolerate early "over-reactions."
  - Acknowledge and apologize for errors and deficiencies.
  - Be explicit about changes in policy and predictions.
Who Outbreak Communication Guidelines

- Announcing early (strategies from this workshop)
  - Don’t over-reassure.
  - "Err on the alarming side." (Most extreme: discuss your own worst cases; respond to worst cases others are concerned about.)
  - Acknowledge uncertainty.
  - Tolerate early "over-reactions."
  - Be willing to speculate (responsibly).
  - Tell people what to expect.

- Transparency (strategies from this workshop)
  - Don’t over-reassure.
  - "Err on the alarming side." (Most extreme: discuss your own worst cases; respond to worst cases others are concerned about.)
  - Acknowledge uncertainty.
  - Share dilemmas.
  - Acknowledge opinion diversity.
  - Establish your own humanity.
  - Tell people what to expect.
  - Acknowledge and apologize for errors and deficiencies.
  - Be explicit about changes in policy or predictions.
Who Outbreak Communication Guidelines

[Know and respond to and listen to] The public (strategies from this workshop)

- Be willing to speculate (responsibly).
- Don't ridicule the public's emotions ("irrational, hysterical").
- Legitimize people's fear and other emotions.
- Tolerate early "over-reactions."
- Offer people things to do.
- Let people choose their own actions [from a range].
- Ask more of people.
- Acknowledge and empathize with people's starting beliefs and attitudes, before trying to change them.

Who Outbreak Communication Guidelines

Planning (strategies from this workshop)

- Acknowledge and empathize with people's [policy and subject expert's] starting beliefs and attitudes before trying to change them.
- Validate how counter-intuitive a lot of these strategies are.
- Include risk communication planners in every stage of risk assessment and risk management.
See also:

**WHO’s Outbreak Communication Best Practices for communicating with the public during an outbreak:**
The report of the WHO Expert Consultation on Outbreak Communications held in Singapore, 21-23 September 2004


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**Press Conference Groups**

Preparation will be simultaneous
Press conferences will be consecutive

1. Mongolia, Malaysia, Vietnam, Fiji, Hawaii
2. Lao, Philippines, Cambodia, PNG, Indon.

Roles in each group: Minister, Risk comm advisor to Minister, other officials? Domestic reporters, International reporters

Target audience (“focus group“): Local residents
Crisis Communication: Guidelines for action, a 64-page manual of handouts covering the material in this presentation is downloadable from The Peter Sandman Risk Communication Website, www.psandman.com, at:

http://psandman.com/handouts/AIHA-DVD.htm

Thank you!