Advancing Health Communication Science and Practice

Lead ICOs: NCI, NIMH, OBSSR

Working Group: FIC, NCATS, NCCIH, NCI, NEI, NHLBI, NIA, NIAID, NIAMS, NICHD, NIDÁ, NIDCR, NIEHS, NIMH, NIMHD, NINDS, NINR, NLM, OBSSR, ONR
Concept Clearance: New Common Fund Program

TITLE: Advancing Health Communication Science and Practice

Objective: To investigate, develop, test, and disseminate new approaches for effective and equitable health communication, including measuring communication exposure and impact, addressing misinformation, engaging communities, and building trust.

Initiatives:
1. Research Network
2. Methods & Measurement Research Projects
3. Coordination & Dissemination Center

Funds Available: $30M per year
Program Duration: 5 years

Council Action: Vote for approval of the concept
Program Co-Chairs and Coordinators

Program Co-Chairs

Joshua Gordon, MD, PhD
Director, NIMH

Christine Hunter, PhD
Acting Director, OBSSR

William Klein, PhD
Associate Director of Behavioral Research, NCI

Working Group Coordinators

Kristin Brethel-Haurwitz, PhD
OBSSR

Collene Lawhorn, PhD
NIMH

Wen-Ying Sylvia Chou, PhD, MPH
NCI

Common Fund Program Leaders

Nadra Tyus, DrPH, MPH
OSC

Stephanie Courchesne-Schlink, PhD
OSC
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Working Group Members</th>
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<tr>
<td>Sara Amolegbe, NIEHS</td>
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<td>Stacey Arnesen, NLM</td>
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<td>Frances Bevington, NINR</td>
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<td>Sekai Chideya-Chihota, NCCIH</td>
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<td>Michelle Doose, NIMHD</td>
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<td>William Elwood, OBSSR</td>
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<td>Alissa Gallagher, NINDS</td>
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<td>Anna Gaysynsky, NCI</td>
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<td>Stephanie George, NIAMS</td>
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<td>Beth Jaworski, OBSSR</td>
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<td>Lenora Johnson, NHLBI</td>
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<td>Nancy Jones, NIMHD</td>
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<td>Christopher Lynch, ONR</td>
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<td>Katelynn Milora, OSC</td>
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<td>Elizabeth Necka, NIA</td>
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<td>Steven Pittenger, NCATS</td>
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<td>Ronna Popkin, NICHD</td>
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<td>Anne Rancourt, NIDA</td>
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<td>Dianne Rausch, NIMH</td>
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<td>Elise Rice, NIDCR</td>
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<td>Melissa Riddle, NIDCR</td>
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<td>Alexa Romberg, NIDA</td>
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<td>Michael Stirratt, NIMH</td>
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<td>Luke Stoeckel, NIA</td>
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<td>Rachel Sturke, FIC</td>
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<td>Robin Vanderpool, NCI</td>
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<td>Cheri Wiggs, NEI</td>
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<td>Natalie Zeigler, NIMH</td>
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<td>Xinzhi Zhang, NHLBI</td>
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<td>Sheryl Zwerski, NIAID</td>
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Why Health Communication?

“…there are things about human behavior that I don’t think we had invested enough into understanding. We basically have seen the accurate medical information overtaken...by the inaccurate conspiracies and false information.... We used to think that if knowledge was made available from credible sources, it would win the day. That’s not happening now.”

Ashish Jha on the pandemic

CNBC, 7/7/22

“We got the biological science right, but we didn’t get the social science right”

Francis Collins on NPR, 12/7/21
Illustrative Example: Research on Debunking Misinformation

- Does debunking backfire?
- Is correction effective?
- Does it work under real-world conditions?
- What other strategies can mitigate the impact of misinformation?
Key Gaps Identified from Planning Activities: January-June 2022

- **Community-engaged, timely** and **useful** communication research
- Science of **trust** and **mistrust** within diverse communities
- **Health and science literacy**
- Addressing the **spread of health-related misinformation**
- Innovative **implementation structures and partnerships** to promote **equitable** health communication
- **Workforce** development for researchers and communicators

**Planning activities:**
- Federal partner listening sessions
- Expert workshop (May 2022)
- An RFI with >50 responses
- Portfolio analysis
- Landscape analysis, including review of previous large-scale communication initiatives
Why a Common Fund Program?

**Cross-disease, synergistic & cross-cutting**
- Health communication is a vital yet underfunded area across all ICs and health topics
- Traditional linear models of translational research are inadequate

**Transformative & catalytic to other areas of behavioral and biomedical science**
- Applicability of *iterative team science* and *community-engaged research*
- Practical solutions, training of a diverse workforce, and active community-engaged outreach and dissemination

**Unique role of the NIH**
- *Coordinated and accelerated research* in health-relevant communication and misinformation
To investigate, develop, test, and disseminate new approaches for effective and equitable health communication, including measuring communication exposure and impact, addressing misinformation, engaging communities, and building trust.
Program Structure

Research Network
Integrated and iterative research across translational continuum to improve health communication practice, foster health literacy, and address misinformation

Coordination & Dissemination Center
Coordination and information sharing across the consortium and dissemination of best practices across audiences

Methods & Measurement Research Projects
Development and testing of innovative measures of communication (e.g., exposure, impact, health/science literacy, mistrust)
Priorities for Research Topics and Approaches

- Trust, mistrust, trustworthiness
- Health and science media literacy and numeracy
- Decision making under uncertainty
- Misinformation and disinformation
- Communication inequities and health disparities
- Iterative team science across translational continuum
- Community informed and engaged
- Cross-disease, cross-behavior, cross-sector, and interdisciplinary
- Responsive, use-inspired, and applicable to end users
- Emphasis on behavioral outcomes and behavior change
- Emphasis on behavioral outcomes and behavior change
• Ecologically-valid, iterative learning cycle research projects across the translational continuum and disciplines to develop and test new health communication approaches that are sustainable and can be adopted by future health communication researchers and in the broader behavior and social science research (BSSR) fields
• Encourage diversity in health communication research workforce
• Sub-initiative: Opportunity funds for rapid-response health communication research tackling new and emerging health communication challenges (see appendix for details)

**Deliverables**
• Effective health communication approaches (e.g., how to meet the needs of the new communication ecosystem, how to foster health literacy, how to identify and mitigate misinformation) with new understanding of what approaches work for whom, under what circumstances, and why
• A cadre of health communication researchers from diverse backgrounds and disciplines
Full-Cycle Translational Framework

**Basic**
Test basic mechanisms and processes that drive or inhibit communication

**Intervention**
Early-phase intervention studies

**Implementation**
Maximum and equitable benefit with an emphasis on real-world applicability and sustainability

To understand the role of emotions, confirmation bias, and social norms

To decrease responses of outrage and encourage checking alternate sources

To scale up mitigation efforts across select social networks through partnership with marketing firms and influencers
Methods and Measurement Research Projects

• Development and testing of innovative methods and measures of health communication exposure, impact, context, predictors (e.g., health and science literacy)
• Assess quality of information (e.g., credibility, interpretability, and usability across audiences)
• Partnerships with technology/social media platforms, marketing experts, and communicators of health information
• Measures developed by this activity to be shared with and adopted by the full-cycle research activities (when appropriate) for additional testing and validation

Deliverables
• Validated methods and measures for factors relevant to the current health communication ecosystem, including exposure to messages, misinformation, impact of communication exposure, the spread of misinformation, health and science literacy, and other predictors of communication outcomes
Consortium-wide coordination and convening to foster collaborations, share results, tackle shared challenges, and facilitate cross-study learning

• Collect, compile, and disseminate evidence-based findings, approaches, and other resources from research and measurement initiatives

• Develop educational/training materials for health communication researchers

• Conduct active outreach to and technical assistance for various audiences, including health communication researchers and health communicators (e.g., scientists, health practitioners, journalists, community leaders)

• Offer expert guidance in health equity and community engaged research

**Deliverables**

• A repository of evidence-based measures, tools, and other resources

• Active dissemination of best practices to health communication researchers and other audiences influenced by health communication research

• Robust assessment of the uptake, use, and impact of all program resources
# Budget

**Budget Phase I: $154.3M over 5 years**

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<tr>
<th>Initiative 1: Research Network (~15-20 projects)</th>
<th>FY24</th>
<th>FY25</th>
<th>FY26</th>
<th>FY27</th>
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<td>Sub-initiative funding begins in year 3 ($200K x 15 sites)</td>
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Council Action:
Vote for approval of the concept for Advancing Health Communication Science and Practice

commonfund.nih.gov
@NIHCommonFund
@NIH_CommonFund
Appendices
Defining health communication & misinformation

**Health communication**: approaches that seek to inform and influence individual and community decisions that enhance health\(^1,2\).

**Health communication science**: inter-disciplinary research and theory development on the processes, effects, and impact of health communication.

**Health misinformation**: any health-related claim of fact that is false, inaccurate, or misleading according to the best available evidence at the time\(^3,4,5\).

*Disinformation*: a coordinated or deliberate effort to spread misinformation in order to gain money, power, or reputation\(^5\).

\(^1\) [https://www.thecommunityguide.org/topic/health-communication-and-health-information-technology](https://www.thecommunityguide.org/topic/health-communication-and-health-information-technology)


Rapid-Response Opportunity Fund

Delayed opportunity fund tackling emerging health communication challenges identified by community/practitioners

- Projects would solicit **time-sensitive problems** from the community through an application/matching process that allow the researchers and the community to come together to develop/test a short-term campaign/program (< 1 yr), which will be implemented and rigorously evaluated in real-time

- **What does it add/Why a sub-component?** Leveraging established infrastructure/expertise, this affords the opportunity for more timely and useful solutions to emerging challenges, enabling communities to articulate their challenge/problems and benefit from the wealth of scholarly research that may be relevant and informative to their practices

| Table showing distinctions between research projects and rapid response projects: |
|-------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| **Research Project** | **Rapid-response set-aside** |
| **Timeline** | 5+ years, starting at initiative’s Year 1 | 1 year, starting at Initiative’s Year 3 |
| **Team composition** | Basic + Applied + translational BSS scientists; multidisciplinary and multi-sector collaborators | Researchers + a small group of health communication practitioners or community leader |
| **Problem definition** | Co-determined (a priori) at the time of application preparation | By community leaders at the time of application solicitation |
| *Clarifications* | While iterative, Research Projects employ a more common community-engaged cyclical framework | One-level further in the direction of community-engaged research; responds only to a new and emerging community-defined communication challenge. |