

Public Abstract

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Title:Communicating medical advances in television health news: The influence of a human interest frame on audiences cognitive and emotional responses

The dissemination of scientific advances in medicine, such as a new medical treatment and prevention/diagnosis technology, became popular in television health news over the last few decades. In order to engage lay audiences with such complex information, health journalists often utilize a human interest frame, which employs a human exemplar and his/her personal anecdotes to report medical advances. The purpose of this study is to investigate the influence of human interest framing in health news reporting of scientific medical advances. Based on framing theory and exemplification theory, this study aims to examine individuals' cognitive and emotional reactions to the news stories in two different news frames (a human interest frame vs. a non-human interest frame).

An experiment was conducted to test the proposed hypotheses and research questions. Responses from 98 participants were analyzed by repeated measures ANOVAs and bootstrapping analysis. Findings of this study empirically supported health journalists' expectations for the advantages of human interest framing in health news. It motivated audiences to become more involved in the news story and understand health information. In response to a human interest frame, people also tended to express greater level of hope and relief, and reported more favorable opinions about the medical achievement they watched. While both challenges and opportunities exist, this study elucidated that human interest framing could serve as a significant news framing tool to construct health news. Some practical and research suggestions are addressed.