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Advancing Excellence in Health Care

Rise Above the Noise: Making News Media and Policymakers Care About Your Research

Mary Darby
Vice President for Health Policy
Burness Communications

June 4, 2010

There's Too Much Noise Out There!





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How Do You Get Heard?

- Know your audiences.
- Have a message.
- Explain your research in simple terms.
- Tell stories.
- If you don't have your own news, link to what's in the news.

Be Memorable

- Be yourself.
- Be accurate, but let go of precision.
- Speak with conviction.
- Be clear, concise and simple.
- Know why your audience is interested.
- Think impact, not process.
- Tell stories.





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Be Memorable





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Be Memorable

Which are you more likely to remember? This ...

“We collaborated with multiple stakeholders to develop, implement and evaluate an interconnected statewide health information system that uses a master index on an Internet platform to facilitate secure access for authorized offsite providers to necessary patient medical record information.”



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Be Memorable

... Or this?

“We helped create a health information network that gives hospitals and doctors across the state the information they need, when they need it, to provide their patients with the best possible care. And it’s working!”



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Message Is Important

A strong message ...

- Goes beyond the findings.
- Answers the question: Who cares and why?
- Connects to your audience.
- Builds support for action.

Findings aren't Message

- **Finding:** Adults in the U.S. fail to receive recommended health care nearly half the time. – *RAND health quality study*
- **Message:** “Most of us take health care quality for granted. This study shows that we can't ... Virtually everyone in this country is at risk for poor care.” – *Elizabeth McGlynn, lead study author*



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Delivering Your Message

- Grab attention and focus on 1-3 points.
- Avoid jargon and use active voice.
- Adapt your message to your audience.
- Restate your message in different ways.
- Tell real-life stories to illustrate the importance of your work.
- Know what action you seek.



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Good Health IT Messages

“[M]y own view, as a doctor who has used [electronic medical records] for almost a decade, is that it is fast becoming a professional responsibility that will be the standard of care in the 21st century.”

– *David Blumenthal, in The Boston Globe (2009)*



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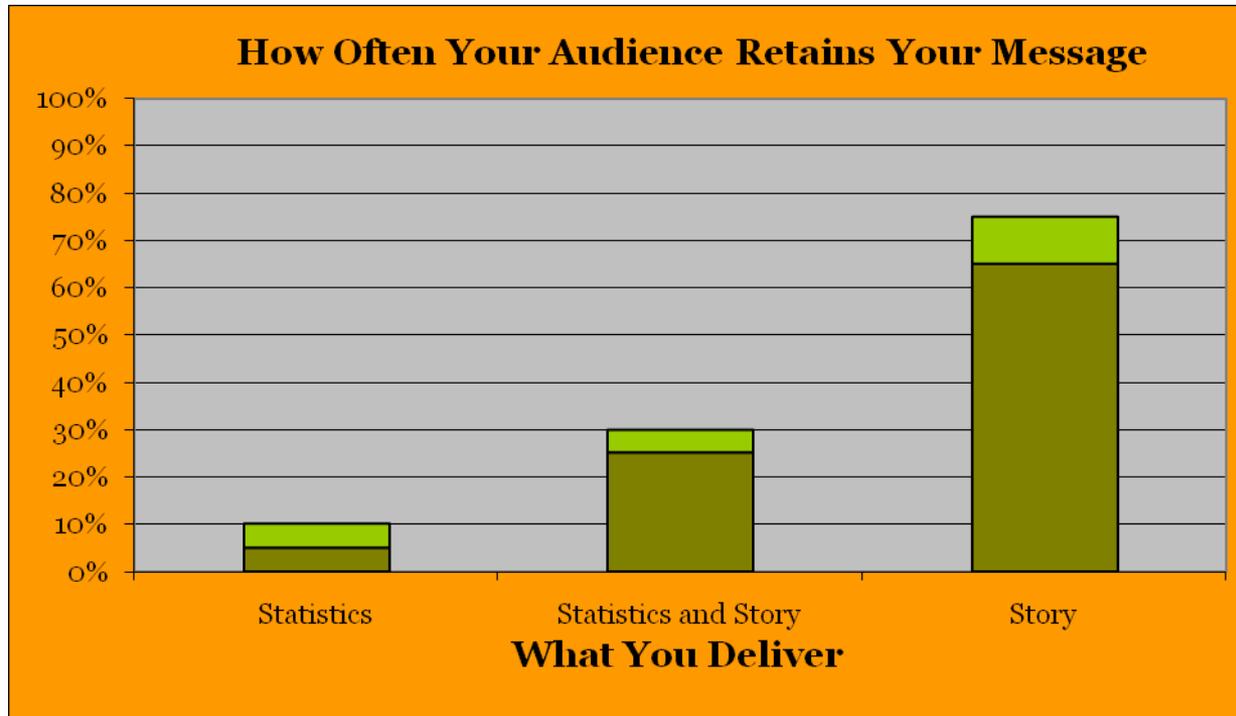
Good Health IT Messages

“VA has seen its investment in health information technology pay off for veterans and taxpayers for many years ... The benefits have exceeded costs, proving that the implementation of secure, efficient systems of electronic records is a good deal for all our citizens.”

– *Eric Shinseki, Secretary of Veterans Affairs, in Information Week (2010)*

Why Tell Stories?

Studies show that stories resonate and stay with audiences more than statistics





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A Good Health IT Story

Bechara Choucair, M.D., had a patient with uncontrolled edema that no one could explain. Then, one day, the patient's medical file was loaded into the health center's new electronic health record system.

“Right away, we got an alert for a drug-drug interaction,” Dr. Choucair says. “The drug that the psychiatrist was giving him was interacting with a drug that his cardiologist was giving him.” But until the EHR system made the link, no one knew. By dropping one of the medications, Dr. Choucair stopped the edema.



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The Message?

Health IT = Patient Safety



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Staying on Message

Bridging

- Acknowledge the question.
- Find a way back to your message.
- Deliver your message.



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A Good Bridge



Bridging Phrases

- “What’s important to remember, however...”
- “What I really want to talk to you about is...”
- “The most important thing you should know is...”
- “The real issue here is...”
- “I don’t know about that, but what I do know is...”
- “Just the opposite is true...”
- “The bottom line is...”

When a Reporter Calls

Ask questions first!

- Who are you dealing with?
- What type of story is this and what is it about ?
- What's the deadline?
- Who else is the reporter interviewing?
- For radio and TV, is this a live or a taped interview?



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Talking to Reporters

- Get to your message as quickly as possible – you don't know how much time you will have.
- Remember that nothing is off the record.
- Never say “no comment.”
- Stick to what you're comfortable discussing.
- It's OK to say “I don't know.”
- Be a resource for reporters.

Talking to Policymakers

- Lay the groundwork for a relationship.
- Translate facts into a compelling message and story.
- Make your case in three minutes.
- Staff matter.
- Have an ask but be willing to compromise.
- Be opportunistic.
- Follow up!

Seizing Opportunities

- **News Release:** For releasing peer-reviewed studies.
- **One-on-One Meeting:** With a reporter, editor or policymaker.
- **News or Policy Briefing:** To share interesting findings or lessons learned on an important issue.
- **Blogs, Twitter:** To raise online awareness.
- **Op-eds and Letters to the Editor:** To express your perspective, usually linked to what's in the news.



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Journal Articles

- Article accepted? Congratulations!
- **Email:** journalpublishing@ahrq.hhs.gov
- AHRQ will collaborate on dissemination with researchers and journal
- **Possible vehicles:**
 - Press release or media pitch
 - AHRQ electronic newsletters
 - AHRQ health IT website



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For More Information

Contact:

Mary Darby

Burness Communications

mdarby@burnesscommunications.com

Thank you!