Food Communication:

*It’s Greek to me!*

Institute of Medicine
Food Forum

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The element of CONFUSION
Top Sources of Food Info

- Internet
- TV
- Magazines
- Newspaper
- Doctors
- Family/friends
- Radio
- Books

72%
Used internet for health info in past year

40 million
Americans used Diet Apps in 2013

ADA Trends 2011; Pew 2013; Comstock 2014; IFIC 2015
Consumers want information

“I actively seek information about nutrition and healthy eating.”
Consumers are thinking about food healthfulness & safety

94% Healthfulness of foods and beverages consumed

84% Safety of food and beverages

Thinking...

- a lot
- a little
Most are trying to control food healthfulness & safety in their own lives

96% Are trying to control diet healthfulness

94% Are trying to control safety of foods and beverages consumed
Half believe it is easier to do their own taxes than figure out how to eat healthfully.

- 52% figure out what to eat to be healthy
- 48% figure out own taxes
Challenges

- Less than optimal nutrient intake & physical activity
- High fat & sugar intake
- Low fruit, vegetable, & fiber intake
- ↑ Body weights & related diseases
- High rate of foodborne illness
Communication Friction
Communication Friction

- Writing Style
  - Flabby writing
  - Difficult reading level
  - Unfriendly vocabulary
Tips for Increasing Physical Activity

“Children and adolescents should do 60 minutes or more of physical activity each day. Most of the 60 minutes should be either moderate- or vigorous intensity aerobic physical activity, and should include vigorous-intensity physical activity at least 3 days a week. As part of their 60 or more minutes of daily physical activity, children and adolescents should include muscle-strengthening activities, like climbing, at least 3 days a week and bone-strengthening activities, like jumping, at least 3 days a week. Children and adolescents are often active in short bursts of time rather than for sustained periods of time, and these short bursts can add up to meet physical activity needs. Physical activities for children and adolescents should be developmentally-appropriate, fun, and offer variety.”

www.choosemyplate.gov

• Physical activity every day builds kids’ health.
• Climbing, running, jumping, and other fun activities that make them breathe hard and sweat are best.
• Every minute of physical activity counts. Try to make them add up to at least 60 minutes daily.
8th to 9th Grade

Average reading level of nutrition education materials

Carbone 2012; Hill-Briggs 2008
Qualified Health Claims

Grade 12

Three grams of soluble fiber daily from whole-grain oat foods, like Cheerios, in a diet low in saturated fat and cholesterol, may reduce the risk of heart disease. Cheerios has 1 gram per cup.
### Health Professional Talk

- Soluble fiber
- Animal Protein
- Diet
- Adolescents
- Females of child-bearing age
- Dark, green, leafy vegetables
- Adequate
- Complex Carbohydrates
- Cardiovascular
- Lipids
- Serum Glucose
- Consume
- Mean

### Consumer Talk

- Fiber
- Meat
- Foods you eat
- Teens
- Women who might get pregnant
- Greens
- Enough of
- Starchy foods
- Heart
- Fat
- Blood Sugar
- Eat
- Average
<10% Are familiar with “insoluble fiber”, “soluble fiber” and “functional fiber”

44% Are familiar with “dietary fiber”

65% Are familiar with “fiber”
Communication Friction

- Inconsistency
- Terminology
- Formatting
- Story Line

Rothman 2006, Verbeke 2008
Scientists really don’t know what we should eat to be healthy.

71%

Report medium to high exposure to contradictory information
Communication Friction

- Streamlining
  - Unfinished story
  - Inadequate context
  - Definitive language
  - Lack of hedging
Hedging

- Increases perceptions of trustworthiness
  - Journalists
  - Researchers
- Reduces nutritional backlash

Jensen 2008, 2011
Streamlining

Confusion

Backlash & Skepticism

↓ Behavior

Vardeman 2008; Nagler 2014; Jensen 2011; Fiscella 1999
Communication Friction

- Lopsided coverage
- 2-sided
  - Descriptive
  - Refutational

Refutational: more persuasive than 1-sided & 2-sided descriptive coverage

Verbeke 2008; Winter 2015; Berger 2010; Allen 1991; O’Keefe 1999
Communication Friction

- Vague call to action
Out of tune

78%

Want to hear what they **should** eat, **not** what they shouldn’t eat

IFIC 2015; Martin-Biggers 2015
"Seems like I’m always hearing information about what not to eat, rather than what to eat."
Communication Friction

- Out of tune
- Poker-faced

....positive content more likely to be read and shared with others
Communication Friction

- Off key
- Poker-faced
- Impersonal
Targeted & Tailored Messages

Are more likely to be

- read and remembered
- rated as attention catching
- saved and discussed with others
- perceived as personally relevant

*They stimulate more active cognitive processing, which enhances message retention and behavior change.*
Communication Friction

- Off key
- Poker-faced
- Impersonal
- Taste worries

Reasons for not eating healthier
"I don’t want to give up the foods I like."

82%
Communication Friction

- Off key
- Poker-faced
- Impersonal
- Taste worries
- Undefined personal benefits
Knowing the benefits correlates with diet quality.

- fiber
- fat
- soy
- beans
- fruits
- vegetables
Communication Friction

- Insufficient use of behavior change theory
- Limited test drives
Friction-free Communication

✔ Tight, accessible, friendly communications
✔ Consistent terms, formats, story lines
✔ Complete stories in context and hedged
✔ Balanced and refutational coverage
✔ Explicit call to action
✔ Positive, emotive, personalized messaging
✔ Keep food taste in mind
✔ Clear personal benefit
✔ Grounded in behavior change theory
✔ Road test messages
Healthy Life
NEXT EXIT