Media framing of preventive health
A scoping review

Presented by
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The problem

• Lifestyle-related chronic diseases are a serious and urgent public health problem (WHO, 2002; AIHW, 2012)

• Complex problems – prevention requires multi-sectoral action at the community and population level (including legislation and regulation) (WHO, 2016)

• But public health policies are not always popular - how can we increase public support and demand for public policy to prevent chronic disease?
Role of the media

• Media plays important role in shaping prevention dialogue - influence public perceptions, support and agenda setting

• Large body of work looking at media reporting of a range of issues

• Pioneering work here at the University of Sydney (e.g., Simon Chapman, Becky Freeman, Julie Leask)
Current study

Aim:

• To conduct a scoping review to map the existing literature on media reporting in relation to chronic disease prevention

Guiding questions:

• What kinds of messages/frames have been identified in previous studies of media reporting of issues related to prevention?

• What evidence is there for the impact of different types of messages on attitudes towards prevention?
Methods

Scoping Review (Arksey & O’Malley, 2005)

Search terms:
Public Health/ OR Health promotion/ OR Health Education OR Health Policy/ OR Overweight/ OR Obesity/ OR Alcohol Drinking/ OR Binge Drinking/ OR Exercise OR Diet/ OR Food habits/ OR Smoking/ OR Smoking cessation/)
AND
Mass Media/ OR Communications Media/ OR Social Media/ OR television.mp OR radio.mp OR news*.mp OR media.mp OR Marketing/ or Marketing of health services/ or Social marketing/ OR advertis*.mp
AND
Framing.mp OR frame.mp OR content analysis.mp

Search limits:
Published between 2005-2015
English Language
### Preliminary findings: Descriptive studies \((n = 52)\)

#### Study characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Details</th>
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| **Media sampled**       | Newspapers (60%)  
                          TV news (21%)  
                          Magazines (17%)                                                  |
| **Media items per study** | Range = 12 – 408,195                                                  |
| **Sampling timeframe**  | Range = 1 week – 33 years                                              |
| **Frequent topics**     | Smoking (25%)  
                          Obesity (19%)  
                          Alcohol (17%)                                                  |
| **Study focus**         | • Article characteristics (e.g. prominence of articles, sources used, differences in reporting across media)  
                          • Coverage of issues (e.g. freq of smoking coverage, coverage over time)  
                          • Framing of issues/arguments                                   |
Preliminary findings: Descriptive studies ($n = 52$)

Coverage of issues:
- Issues related to prevention or policy/regulation are rarely the focus of news reports

Framing of issues related to prevention:
- ‘Individual responsibility’ for causes and solutions was dominant frame across topics
- Some ‘community/societal responsibility’ framing and evidence that this is increasing over time but still minority

Media reporting of policy/legislation:
- Framing of policy issues rarely positive (often mixed, neutral, or negative), except when related to protection of children
# Preliminary findings: Empirical studies ($n = 12$)

## Study characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Details</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Frequent topics</strong></td>
<td>Obesity, smoking ($n = 3$ each)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nutrition, alcohol/drugs ($n = 2$ each)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Diabetes, physical activity ($n = 1$ each)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participants</strong></td>
<td>Range = $54 - 2490$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Frames tested</strong></td>
<td>Gain- vs. loss-frame ($n = 5$)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Health vs. appearance frame ($n = 1$)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Public health (society) vs. Traditional (individual) frame ($n = 2$)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Internal vs. external cause ($n = 2$)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Health promotion vs. prevention ($n = 1$)</td>
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</tbody>
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**Study focus/outcomes**

- Attitudes, intentions and/or performance of behaviour ($n = 9$)
- Attributions of cause, responsibility and/or risk perception ($n = 2$)
- Support for policy ($n = 2$)
Preliminary findings: Experimental studies ($n = 12$)

Effects of framing on attitudes towards prevention:

- Exposure to certain causal frames (e.g. SDH, genetics), influences perceptions about illness causes

Framing of issues and support for policy:

- ‘Individual responsibility’ framing associated with reduced support for policy
- ‘Public health framing’ (preventable, with societal causes and solutions), increases support for policy
Policy implications

• Provides insights into media framing of prevention and how this may influence public support for policies

• Potential lessons for advocates and policy makers in terms of framing of causes and solutions to increase likelihood of support

• Need for more effective ways of framing messages to garner public support for prevention
  • Concerted efforts to work with the media to change the dialogue around public health and prevention?
  • Creative ways of getting messages into the public sphere?