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MAXIMIZING HEALTH OUTCOMES THROUGH OPTIMAL COMMUNICATION

Communication in the area of health is now a central concern for policy makers, economists, and academics. Switzerland, as well as other countries in Europe and North America, has confronted different crises ranging from public debates around the bird flu, obesity, and human genetic research to concerns about communication in different health settings. Researchers who examine the impact of communication on health and health care delivery are privileged to focus upon processes of fundamental human import. The media play a key role in each of these debates and the importance of the provider-patient interaction is an ever-growing concern in the dissemination of quality health care. More and more, it seems that the key question in relation to communication and health is how to maximize health outcomes through optimal communication.

In this article we first examine briefly the field of Health Communication, noting the evolving and dynamic nature of the field as well as the variety of disciplines and topics that have been brought together to understand health communication. Then, we outline the various ongoing research projects in the Institute of Communication and Health and how they seek to address aspects of a central issue — maximizing health outcomes through optimal communication.

Keywords: health communication; health literacy; direct to consumer advertising.

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