What's the point of communication?

Workshop on Enhancing Communication Around Influenza Vaccination

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A 20th Century notion of communication based on a mechanical transmission model is preventing us from making substantial progress and achieving critical public health outcomes.
We must think differently and expand our notion of communication in public health

"More complex than we thought"
Barnett Pearce, 1989

"Our approach has been simplistic"
"Shifting from "communication simple" to "communication complex" is part of the same shift that moves us from Newtonian physics to Quantum Mechanics and the Theory of Relativity"

Professor John Parrish-Sprowl, Co-Director Global Health Communications Center Indiana University Purdue University
Building communication capacity: big picture challenges

IHR Risk Communication Working Group, 2011

- Lack of understanding of implications of IHR Risk Communication among "communicators".
- Devaluation of communication in general, and less than optimal among technical specialists and policy makers.
- Lack of global advocates for risk communication.
- Gaps in evidence to support development of national risk communication plans.
- Better integration needed of risk communication into national implementation plans and planning process.
- A disconnect between risk communication and existing large-scale communication capacity building activities in countries.
If we were to compare building health communication capacity to building laboratory capacity…

…we have focused only on giving the results to the patient
Communication simultaneously occurs at many levels in different locations over time.
How we understand communication determines how effectively it is applied

- Communication as a **science** and **discipline**
- Communication as a **profession** (journalists, PR, marketing, health promotion, advocacy)
- Communication and the **industries** that profit from it (media, marketing)
- Communication **methodologies, strategies, tactics, tools and channels**
Where does communication need to be enhanced in public health?

1. To help identify and design the appropriate interventions and programmes that respond to the needs and concerns of end-users to save lives and protect health.

   **Communication skills of people in the technical areas, programmes, and specific job functions, related to service planning and delivery**

2. To gather, analyse and share information so public health staff are able to make appropriate and timely decisions about programme strategies, resources and activities.

   **Communication practices and norms between teams, disciplines and different levels of the health system, staff and agencies**

3. To help ensure that appropriate strategies are being used to constructively engage the hearts and minds of groups, communities, populations who will benefit from the interventions.

   **Communication strategies and interventions**
Investing in communication supports a more effective, resilient and responsive public health system
Thank You