Principles

This multi-phase research informed the development of seven core principles for communicating health risk and safety messaging on FDA-regulated products to the public. Organizations should consider following these best practices, which have been tested rigorously via quantitative survey and in-depth interviews with health communicators and practitioners, when developing and disseminating messages.

Messages should be accessible and resonate across a range of media. Health communications are only effective if they are accessible, meet people in familiar spaces, and use direct language.

Messages should convey transparency and honesty. Clear and honest messages build public trust and make people feel respected and included, especially when they understand why decisions are made.

Messages should anticipate confirmation bias to engage selective interpreters. Most people search for health information to reaffirm an existing belief, so health messaging must provide clear and fact-based knowledge to engage even selective interpreters.

Messages need to build trust by demonstrating relatability and authenticity. People pay attention to messaging that resonates with them and is perceived as coming from a place of genuine concern for human safety.

Messages need to contain sufficient detail. Messaging with sufficient detail reaches more people, especially when a call to action is relayed.

Messages should emphasize personal choice. People do not want to be told what to do. They prefer messaging that provides them with the information needed to make an informed choice for themselves.

Messaging should convey proactivity. People prefer to hear from authorities soon after incidents occur, even if the situation is developing.

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