



**ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER**

**Medical Science**

**EFFECTIVENESS OF VISUAL COMMUNICATION TO COMPREHEND HEALTH EDUCATION – A RATIONAL APPROACH**

**KEY WORDS:** Visual communication, mass approach, health education.

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**ABSTRACT**

Visual communication is a innovative mass health education strategy which essentially enhance learning and comprehension. The communication is visualized for shaping ideas and changing attitudes and modifying behaviors towards healthful lifestyles desired for health promotion. Literacy level of Indian population is low so is the health literacy so by visual effective communication learning is driven for more lasting and productive direction.

**INTRODUCTION**

Communication can be regarded as a process of exchanging of shaping ideas, feelings and information. Communication strategies essentially enhances learning. Ultimate aim of all communication is to bring about a change in thought process in desired direction. This may be at the cognitive level by increasing knowledge, affective by changing the pattern of behavior and attitudes; or psychomotor in terms of a acquiring new skills. These are referred to as learning objective communication design as a distinct discipline from other forms of visual arts, the purposes, approaches and role of visual communication in our everyday life is visualized so it becomes self explanatory for individuals of all levels of understanding<sup>[1]</sup>. It explores the different levels on which a piece of visual communication could be viewed and read, through analyzing of sender and receiver processes. visual communication that has a purpose or objective, created with the intention of reaching to a predetermined 'audience' or 'user'<sup>[2]</sup>. In the development of newer methods of communication and information explosion, the mental development has expanded considerably for clearer thinking and better inter-sectorial coordination.

The tell-tale sign of whether something is art or design. It has to do with its purpose and the context of use. 'Art' in the traditional sense is more expressive, with less concern about the audience and more focus upon the 'self', while design has more to do with 'targeted' communication, with more efforts spent in comprehending the audience or user. But again 'functional', 'purposeful' and 'targeted' are perhaps the key terms that distinguish 'art' from 'design'<sup>[2]</sup>.

Visual communication used to be called 'graphic design' until quite recently. With the emergence of new media beyond printed matters, terms like 'communication design' or 'visual communication' became popular in order to reconnect the increasing complexity of the understanding, and rightly puts the focus in the core of the visual — communication<sup>[3]</sup>.

'To design is much more than simply to assemble, to order, or even to edit; it is to add value and meaning, to illuminate, to simplify, to clarify, to modify, to dignify, to dramatize, to persuade, and perhaps even to amuse. To design is to transform prose into poetry. Design broadens perception, magnifies experience, and enhances vision. Design is the product of feeling and awareness, of ideas that originate in the mind of the designer and culminate, one

hopes, in the mind of the spectator.' Paul Rand, Design form and chaos, 1993

**APPROACHES TO VISUAL COMMUNICATION**

Depending on the comprehension some take a more analytical approach, some more conceptual, some expressive. Like brand identity designing, illustrations, information design, publication design, advertising and promotion designing, motion and animated designing. In the country like India where the literacy rate is so low and more than three fourth population is residing in rural fragments with bare minimum amenities and health facilities. The quality of living is on a lower segment. In Indian scenario keeping all constraints, in mind like illiteracy, unawareness and poverty, easy and impactful communication methodology is ideal. This is an attempt to conceptualize healthy practices and life styles for healthful living by designing the visual communication. Evidence based health practices are conveyed in the simple and tradition manner so that local masses easily comprehend. Designers in fact take detours: they begin with a design problem, gather facts (research) and then try to come up with as many possible solutions to this problem as they can. This is called 'divergent thinking'. Many methods could be used, for example mind-mapping, sketching, photography, collage, etc. At this stage the designer should not be too critical about what they produce. Once a lot of ideas are generated, the designer would then have to chose the most appropriate, effective, or innovative solution to the problem. So this could be the ideal methodology for health Education effectively and efficiently. By inculcating basic perspective for helpful understanding

Recent research has shown that patients recurrently experience difficulties understanding health-relevant concepts. The interpretation of health-related risk information not only requires advanced knowledge but also language proficiency. Thus, another factor that can significantly affect accuracy in the understanding of treatment risk reduction is patients' proficiency in the language in which risk information is communicated<sup>[4]</sup>.

Future work should directly aim to trace attentional and cognitive processes underlying the effect of visual aids, including icon arrays and also other kinds of displays. This is an essential step in efforts to facilitate the development of psychologically sensitive training methods that enhance the understanding of quantitative medical information for disadvantaged individuals. Ultimately, the studies outlined above emphasize the importance and value of working

towards the development of custom- tailored risk communication interventions that are sensitive to the various needs and abilities of diverse individuals who must make potentially life altering pronouncements<sup>[4][5], [6], [7], [8], [9], [10]</sup>.

Communication creates implication to any evidence or message specified. Health education is assigning or giving information, persuading, influencing or warning individuals about risky behavior and life styles inclusive of environmental changes which may have direct or indirect implication on health. According to Achalu , Health communication is an art and technique of enlightening inspiring motivating individual or groups about imperative health issues<sup>[11]</sup>.

Furthermore, in Ratzan Health communication encompasses the study and use of communication strategies to inform and influence Individual and community decisions that enhance health<sup>[12]</sup>.

Nsel and Roth viewed wellness as optimal health and vitality, encompassing, physical, emotional, Intellectual, spiritual, interpersonal and social and environmental well- being<sup>[13]</sup>.

**HEALTH COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES**

Evidence dissemination methods makes use of variety of media to offer information to the public about the jeopardy of a specific lifestyle, adoptions and individual conduct as well as the benefits of swapping that behavior and refining the quality of life. Whilst conveying information, it is important to uphold reliability in the aesthetic manifestation, linguistics style, character and message. Amongst them are: Noar, Benac and Harris explained some health communication strategies embrace awareness promotions, entertainment advocacy, media advocacy, new technologies and inter personal communication<sup>[14]</sup>.

Health communication campaign unswervingly delivers education to people who are anticipated to implement or transformation to a healthier behaviour.<sup>[15]</sup> Furthermore, Rural Health Information Hub expressed that effective Health information communication strategies include; use of Research Based Strategies probing peoples, culture, and languages and literacy acceptance on priorities to intricate and deliberate literacy to acknowledge health literacy. That is to comprehend if the people are erudite about the risky behavior and life-styles . Situation analysis of demography laterally geo mapping too is an imperative step to ascertain communication modality<sup>[16]</sup>.

**TRADITIONAL AND RURAL BASED COMMUNICATION**

Traditional and rural based communication is clearly designed to address the peculiar of the rural developers. Before the proliferation of modern technologies, communities devised their own strategies of communicating among themselves as well as in this era of media propagation and advanced technology for communication.

It is however, important to note that some of these rural communities have evolved in terms of embracing certain aspect of modern media for community mobilization for health campaign. Example is children immunization, political sensitization and others. Examples of traditional communication are town crier, age grade meetings and many more.

Town crier: The town crier is a significant village "broad caster" who summons villagers or decision maker on issues concerning the community. " Even in the modern times, town crier plays a pivot role in health advocacy and sensitization<sup>[17], [18]</sup>.

Age grade/gender meeting: It is another effective approach utilized to spread community on health related issues. Various groups have specific days/ months for meeting and can therefore create an avenue for health educator to furnish and convey health related messages<sup>[17]</sup>.

**BROADCAST MEDIA TOOLS (RADIO AND TELEVISION)**

Broadcast media is used to capture wide audience within a defined

time frame. Broadcasting is transmission of audio and video messages via electro-magnetic waves to reach millions of homes almost the same time. It is the most expedient means to transmit information immediately to the widest possible audience. The broadcast consist of the television and the radio media channels and both have been effective in carrying successful health campaign. Radio programmers are less expensive than most television program and so a great choice for low cost budget. Unlike Television, most radio stations are mobile and are designed to gauge audience response. Television has a wide geographic coverage and broad audience reach. It records success for promoting health campaign and health advocacy messages.

Newsletter/journals: These are great way of creating awareness on health related issues. Newsletters are printed report containing information of activities or health problems and are sent by mails. They are always to be referred to in case of any doubt<sup>[17]</sup>.

Bill boards/posters: They cover a great population. They serve as a great medium to cover health message. Messages on bill boards/posters give audience the opportunity to reach target audience on the move<sup>[18], [19]</sup>.

Social media/internet: The internet has brought us several new mainstream communication tools and changed the communication landscape. It is described as the communication revolution; internets have saved us time in creation and development of messages. Examples are e-mail, SMS, instant messaging (yahoo, MSN messages), video conferencing, face book, whatsapp, twitter and others (Merrian-webster.com)<sup>[17]</sup>.

**BENEFITS OF HEALTH COMMUNICATION**

Health communication prevents and sustains healthy behaviour and makes individuals feel at ease and improvising the learning outcome by manifolds. The utilization of behaviour change communication is achieved by awareness about basic healthy tips, motivates individuals to seek services and help them to successfully adapt on methods of choice<sup>[18]</sup>. However Centre for Disease Control stated that health communication increases audience knowledge awareness of any health related issues. Health communication demonstrates the benefits of behaviour changes to public health outcomes. It advocates a position on a health issues or policy. Health communication causes increase demand and support for health services as well as removal of misconceptions on health related issues<sup>[17]</sup>.

**BARRIERS OF EFFECTIVE HEALTH COMMUNICATION**

**Low health literacy**

There may be difficulty in understanding the message hence; literature should be used for impact on of knowledge<sup>[17]</sup>.

**Poor communication link**

Hospitals are made up of different ethnic groups with socio-cultural differences, languages, religion and economic differences, thus communica on link between the health workers and the communites.

**Poor research**

The developing countries find it difficult to carry out research. Therefore, to design, develop and implement health programmes becomes difficult.

Some barriers of health communications as identified by Achalu are listed as follows:Wrong person sending messages. Lack of receivers.Unclear messages. Inappropriate channel. Inadequate feedback and noise distorting the message<sup>[11]</sup>.

As for many behaviours that distress health, high-quality studies confirmed that we can change the behaviour of people through specific interventions of information and health education. In this context, the role of media effective tool of visual communication is fundamental; It would be, therefore, desirable for the professionals of health and information to work together to rethink and review the fundamental principles of health promotion.

As for the contents of such an information, disease takes precedence over the sick person as individual, meaning that technical-scientific information prevails on psychological aspects.

In fact, we rarely talk about fear, anxiety, sense of isolation or problems related to the relationship between doctor and patient, all elements strictly connected with serious pathologies.

Anyway, language tends to be simpler and more comprehensible both in print and television, radio and internet; the media try to treat a few central arguments in support of the subjects treated. Best conveyed through vision-graphic communication strategy As far as the subjects are concerned, the area of research and new technologies prevails on assistance and health services. There are many services on prevention and arrangements for their practical implementation<sup>[11]</sup>.

Then, the state of health communication is closer to a dissemination of knowledge and skills, more than a form of education and promotion of correct behaviours. Much more could be done to improve this aspect of health communication, in front of the new and growing awareness of the patient and health responsibility and his personal commitment in prevention, improving his level of health<sup>[20]</sup>.

Communication is a very important priority for the effectiveness of information, prevention and awareness campaigns in the area of public responsibility about health education and health promotion of the individual and the whole community<sup>[21]</sup>. Also we feel an increasing demand of our society for an accurate information about health and wellness in general from a side, and from the other an increasing owe of information coming from different sources, sometimes of uncertain scientific level, which risk to rise false alarms and unwarranted fears<sup>[13]</sup>.

Health institutions have to answer many demands about the complex issue of health, requiring an educational and information effort, with the risk of being lost in many streams of communication.

The National Health Programme should promote an adequate communication between users, health professionals, citizens and services and raise awareness throughout the community on issues pertaining the relationships between health and environment, food safety, drug addiction and all forms of health protection, as well as ensuring fairness and quality, strengthen healthy lifestyles, implementing control systems on user satisfaction, provide information tools to avoid the dangers and risks.

All that puts in evidence the need to change the institutional communication approach talking about health care and health system from an ethic point of view. Health information must be considered a value that enriches the society and helps to improve health care and the health system which are common property and belong to the whole society<sup>[20]</sup>.

### THE ROLE OF INFORMATION IN THE HEALTH EDUCATION INTERVENTIONS

Health promotion involves the construction of ways to provide scientific information, both to encourage the individuals toward the motivational basis for developing non-risky behaviours and to modify the existing ones.

Therefore, preventive strategies must include health education through information and educational campaigns that can reach the entire population with general information. But they should include interventions of personalized information to promote the modification of risk behaviours and the adoption of adequate living styles, implemented within a relationship of professional help to put an emphasis on individual cultural and social features<sup>[12][13]</sup>.

Health communication should be in co-operated in the curriculum of all levels of health institutions to equip health educators/providers with adequate knowledge concerning communications on health related issues. Different communication tools are open used as part of an excessive

communication plans and must serve its purpose. The strategic or plans adopted should be skillful to bring about positive change in behaviour. Skillful strategies adopted in communication opens way for proper understanding of health issues that features the people and calls for behavioural change. Health education which aims at bringing Change in health behaviour must be tailored to the specific type of communication and tools that makes the outmost sense to the target audience<sup>[17]</sup>. Therefore, Beato, Richrdo and Jana explained that improving health literacy is achieved by disseminating health information that influences personal health choices. "The promotion, maintenance and restoration of health require community health related information"<sup>[22]</sup>.

Health communication serves as the medium that is used to create awareness to the individual clusters and communities on health related concerns. Health promotion provides knowledge, skills and capacity to assist individuals, groups and communities in identifying health needs, obtaining information and resources and mobilizing them to achieve change. However, WHO de ned "health promotion as the process of enabling people to increase control over and to improve their health"<sup>[23]</sup>.

### CONCLUSION

Behavioural change is a difficult task to achieve. Hence factual information should be designed to motivate people achieve change in behaviour. Healthy behaviour such basic hygiene, Environment sanitation, aexercise, good nutrition, healthy sexual practices, avoiding of substance (alcohol, drug, cigare es) abuse, routine medical check among others are practices that promote good health (well-being).

Health promotion supports personal and society development by affording evidence which progresses health and enhance wellbeing. Communication on generates meaning to any information given. Changing an previously existing behavior is very challenging. However, with effective communication and solicitation of effective strategies in a predetermined and intensive approach behavioral change could be achieved. Therefore, this paper expunges some of the strategies adopted by the health educator to influence people and bring about behavioral transformation encouragingly. Benefits of health communication include increasing audiences' knowledge and awareness on health related issues and its advocacy for health issue and policies were identified. Also barriers such as low health literacy and poor communications were identified. Amalgamation of tradition communication methodologies along with visual communication can bring about a revolutionary adoption It was concluded that health communications contribute to all aspects of disease prevention and health promotion. Hence, the recommendation is that health communication should be included in all levels of health's curriculum to enable health educators acquire better skill to promote health and improve well-being.

### ETHICAL CLEARANCE :

Ethical clearance has been obtained by Institutional Ethical Clearance Committe.

### CONFLICT OF INTEREST :

None

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