



## Best Practices in Effective Communication of Health Research

Developing and sharing key messages is a core step in dissemination, an essential Genetic Alliance value, and a critical component for engaging stakeholders in people-centered health research, services, and care. The process of distributing actionable and timely information—tailored for specific audiences and settings—demonstrates a commitment to the [core engagement principles](#) of reciprocity, transparency, and accountability.<sup>1</sup>

Many of the typical challenges we face in creating clear and effective health messages can be offset with planning and early engagement of community stakeholders. The following recommendations can guide the development of people-centered communication and dissemination plans<sup>2,3</sup>:

1. **Budget for and design** communications plans that matches the needs of the appropriate stakeholder community and addresses their concerns.
2. **Understand the context and segment by intended audiences.** Ensuring messages are tailored and easy to understand by a variety of audiences is critical to implementing a people-centered dissemination strategy.<sup>1</sup> Shaping your strategy with an intended audience in mind allows for a bidirectional flow of information between health professionals (e.g., researchers, clinicians, public health practitioners) and the stakeholder community.
3. **Construct messages to fit a wide range of communication methods** for non-scientific stakeholders, including traditional media (print, radio, and television), websites, newsletters, public meetings, and/or social media. Though dissemination formats vary depending on the intended audience and use, the same core engagement principles apply to making medical knowledge and health information available.
4. **Use plain language** to summarize complex topics with illustrative graphics to break up the text. Strive for simplicity when conveying technical messages and omit details that do not relate to the main message.
5. **Engage an editorial panel** and other feedback mechanisms to assess readability and transparency. Select pretesting approaches (focus groups, interviews, surveys, etc.) and readability tools that fit within the project timeline and budget.<sup>4</sup>
6. **Translate** final messages into stakeholder audience's native languages. Pilot material with intended audiences to explore sensitivities and ensure messages are culturally and linguistically appropriate. Review translated content for accuracy.<sup>4</sup>
7. Make your **dissemination materials accessible in multiple formats** (e.g., print, online, listservs, social media, newsletters, Q&A forums). Track the reach of messages and evaluate future dissemination needs.

### Looking for more information? Check out these additional resources:

[NIH Checklist for Communicating Science and Health Research to the Public](#)  
[Navigating the Translation and Dissemination of Public Health Services and Systems Research Findings](#)  
[Field Guide to Designing a Health Communication Strategy](#)  
[CDC Clear Communication Index](#)

<sup>1</sup> Brownson, Ross C., et al. "[Research Full Report: Getting the Word Out: New Approaches for Disseminating Public Health Science.](#)" *Journal of Public Health Management and Practice* 24.2 (2018): 102.

<sup>2</sup> PCORnet. "[Sourcing Tools Across PCORnet: Dissemination of Results.](#)" September 2018.

<sup>3</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "[Disseminating program achievements and evaluation findings to garner support.](#)" *Evaluation Briefs* 9 (2018).

<sup>4</sup> Centers for Medicare & Medicaid. "[Toolkit for Making Written Material Clear and Effective.](#)" March 2012.