

Mass Media as a relevant tool in Ebola prevention: a viewpoint

¹Joseph Oluchukwu Wogu, ²Oluebube Amarauche Chukwu

Abstract

Ebola is a lethal disease. Promoting an understanding of why clinicians should maximize the power of mass media to inform the public about Ebola can help influence clinical practice in cases of outbreak. This paper is concerned with the relevance of the mass media in Ebola prevention. From the reviewed literature, we argue that the mass media can be helpful in the control and prevention of Ebola.

Keywords: Ebola; mass media; prevention, viewpoint

I. Introduction

The mass media is a relevant tool in disseminating information about disease outbreak, symptoms, prevention and curative measures. Media reportage of disease outbreak is usually prompt and informative.¹ The mass media provides relevant information about disease surveillance, education, sensitisation/awareness, mobilisation, and updates. There are media tools to deliver information about Ebola including newspapers, radio, billboards, drama, television, music, the new media, and/or mobile phones, social media that would help inform the public and wage war against Ebola disease.² Thus, this paper aims to succinctly pinpoint the relevance of the mass media in Ebola disease prevention.

II. Methodology

The materials and information extracted for this review were obtained from peer-reviewed journals, working papers, public health agencies' websites and grey literatures. The authors independently synthesized and compared the information obtained prior to providing the final draft.

III. Results and Discussion

The mass media can provide information about Ebola outbreak using a worst-case scenario approach.³ This approach can arouse people's awareness and synergy to control the spread of Ebola.³ The media contributed to the curbing of Ebola in affected regions.⁴ Thus, the mass media is fundamental in making the prevention and control Ebola effective. It led to health and social behaviour modification, which helped to

¹ Department of Mass Communication, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Enugu State, Nigeria

² Department of Mass Communication, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Enugu State, Nigeria.

contain the spread of the virus.⁵ With the aid of media campaigns, precautionary measures were adopted by families, organisations, institutions, and groups to contain and put an end to the epidemic.⁵ The media coverage of Ebola contributed to public awareness about reported infections and casualties, and helped to control the spread of the disease.^{6,7,8} Many have criticised the information from the media on the premise that people will not appreciate the reality and fatality of the disease.⁹ However, in our own view, the media provided headlines that presented the prevailing situation about Ebola.

IV. Conclusion

Ebola control and prevention requires mass media intervention and campaigns for its prevention and management to be effective. Clinicians can use the media as a tool for informing the public about how to prevent and manage Ebola. In our own view, the media is a helpful tool in the control and prevention of Ebola and other emerging infectious diseases.

Ethical clearance- Not required

Source of funding- Self

Conflict of Interest – Nil

References

1. Househ M. Communicating Ebola through social media and electronic news media outlets: A cross-sectional study. *Health Informatics J.* 2016; 22(3):470-8.
2. King E. *Fighting Ebola with Information.* New York: USAID, 2015. Available from: <http://blog.usaid.gov/2015/05/fighting-ebola-with-information>
3. Centre for Disease Control. *Outbreaks chronology: Ebola Virus Disease. Known cases and outbreaks of Ebola Virus Disease, in reverse chronological order, 2014.* Available from: <http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/>
4. Adekunle AL, Adnan HM. *Communicating Health: Media Framing of Ebola Outbreak in Nigerian Newspapers.* *Malaysian J Commun,* 2016; 32(2): 362-380
5. Long C. *Fighting Fear and Stigma with Accurate Information.* Health Communication Capacity Collaborative, 19 August, 2015. Available from: <http://healthcommcapacity.org/fighting-fear-and-stigma-with-accurate-information>
6. Fritz GK. *How the news surrounding Ebola can impact children in America.* *The Brown University Child and Adolescent Behaviour Letter,* 2015; 31(1): 1-8
7. Lusimana BT. *Pas de nouveau cas d'Ebola enregistré [No reported new case of Ebola], 2014.* Available from: <http://www.minisanterdc.cd/new/index.php/direction/137-pasde-nouveau-cas-d-ebola-enregistre>

8. Atiq E. Crisis communication in the context of the Pakistan floods. In: Löffelholz M, Schwarz A (Eds.). Working papers of the International Research Group on Crisis Communication (vol. 1). Ilmenau, Germany: Ilmenau University of Technology/Department of Media Studies, 2011.
9. Seale C. How the mass media report social statistics: A case study concerning research on end-of-life decisions. *Soc Sci Med* 2010; 71(5): 861-868.