



MEDIA

REPRESENTATIVES GUIDE



2023 AMWHO INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
PLANETARY HEALTH AND THE HUMAN CONDITION

OVERVIEW

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In a world of rapid global communication, information is available in a few seconds. At the center of this increasingly globalized world, the media holds the ability to raise awareness around pertinent health issues and ultimately alter national and international policies. If used appropriately, media can be utilized to spread vital information and catalyze change at the highest levels. In the context of global health policy, the media can often spur change through exposing inequalities and challenging existing systems of power. In this respect, media reporters and institutions are fundamental among global health actors in advocating for and shaping health reforms. Your role as media representatives will include advocating for global health policy reforms while reporting with journalistic integrity, honor, and impartiality.

The media constantly has to balance upholding journalistic integrity while promoting the highest level of fairness and accuracy. To mimic accuracy it is vital that you, as media representatives, adhere to a similar code of ethics. Throughout the conference, feel free to ask delegates about their underlying motivations and the effectiveness of their proposed responses. It is within your responsibilities and duties to hold institutions accountable for the actions they take and the information they are distributing. If actors have insufficient literature, your reports could include this information to express credibility concerns. When writing your article(s), make sure to use all resources available to accurately portray the positive and negative aspects of public health innovations. While these are only some examples of possible media responsibilities, feel free to creatively expand upon this list and implement other ideas within your report(s), while maintaining the code of journalistic integrity and fairness.

Lastly, with the increasing presence of information driving media reports, your article(s) should aspire to provide transparency. Conscious examples of this could include utilizing context specific language and terminology to avoid ambiguity. This is of the utmost importance as possible misinformation and bias of health information could ultimately threaten public health measures. Susceptible to political skews and overarching influence, media report(s) by representatives should avoid using politicized terminology and seek to include impartiality whenever possible. As a media delegate, you could describe scientific studies with appropriate language, being cautious to avoid misphrasing and complex terminology. Additionally, you may consider the role of local media bias, and defer to using narrative forms within difficult areas, like active warzones, at the cost of impartiality. Regardless, your writing should be based on some form of evidence.

Ultimately, your role as media representatives is integral to shaping global health policy and determining behavior at the international and national levels.

OVERVIEW

MEDIA ROLES

As Media Delegate you will be acting as a representative for this year's media organizations (CNN, BBC, and AlJazeera). You will be interacting with delegations to prepare newspaper articles that inform and influence on the public health topics covered during the conference. Throughout this particular conference, you will have the opportunity to participate in two press conferences with delegations. Within these conferences, media representatives will have the ability to engage with representatives of countries to discuss their proposed public health initiatives, question motives, and gain insight into challenges and supporters of specific initiatives. The information from these two press conferences can be used to shape your article(s).

While investigative reporting is theoretically centered around impartiality, media outlets hold unique values and inherent biases. As you consider choosing organizations to engage with and stories to report on, it may be beneficial to reflect on your own positions and where you best fit within global health.

Why are you here?

How do you want to create an impact through your role as a media representative?

How has the media shaped you, and is there anything that you wish were different?

Keeping these questions in mind, approach debates with an open yet self aware mindset. In real life, the media has the ability to impact behavior and opinions, and you should consider this when maximizing the power of your role. Your curiosity and creativity will drive your part as an effective media representative.

DELIVERABLES

To gauge your engagement throughout the conference, you will be expected to complete and submit some deliverables by the end of the conference. These include 2 developed newspaper articles (within 500 to 750 words), 2 shorter articles (no longer than 500 words), and the maintenance of a Twitter account for reporting. These articles will be published on an AMWHO WordPress blog for all delegates to access.

For submission purposes, each representative will be given access to a Twitter account for their respective institution. Be sure to submit your articles to marcelo_garibaldi@unc.edu. Media representatives will also use GroupMe to communicate throughout the conference, so make sure to have the application open and notifications on throughout the duration of the conference.



CABLE NEWS NETWORK (CNN)

CNN (Cable News Network) is based out of Atlanta, GA and is one of the biggest media companies in the world. Their international 24-hour running news channel, social media platforms, and website reach approximately 80 million households, which gives them the capability to reach and influence many people.

AL JAZEERA

Al Jazeera is an Arabic language international news network of Qatar. Their company emphasized the importance of highlighting the “human side” of world events, and while they are based in the middle east to reach Arabic speaking viewers, they have influence and platforms that are relevant all over the world.

BRITISH BROADCASTING CORPORATION (BBC)

BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation) is based out of London, England and is the oldest and biggest broadcaster in the world. Their priority on public service and impartial news gives them the ability to educate people in the UK and around the world.

CASES STUDIES

Detailed below are some specific cases of how the media has successfully interacted with global health. The examples are intended to improve your understanding of the various ways in which different media can frame the lack of necessities for life within a conflict zone, shift the global attention to a specific issue, influence health related policy, and hold nation actors accountable.

CASE STUDY I: COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The COVID-19 pandemic was one of the first global pandemics that the world experienced in an era defined by unprecedented digital connectivity. This placed a large responsibility on media outlets with disseminating accurate information about the virus in a timely manner, with the aim of containing its spread. The ability of media outlets to educate their viewers on essential safety measures was critical, as it had the potential to save countless lives. In Canada, where the per-capita case and death rates were the lowest, and in the United States, where these rates were consistently the highest, studies conducted between March 2020 and August 2023 analyzed media coverage of the pandemic.⁹ The findings revealed a correlation between media reporting and infection rates. Specifically, media outlets in the United States that leaned toward the populist-right adopted a low sensationalist (rendering news as more extraordinary than it is) approach and had low scientific quality, while other countries with higher sensationalism and scientific quality tended to have lower infection rates.⁹ This suggests that media outlets play a crucial role in shaping public attitudes toward the pandemic, and that they should be mindful of the information they present, as well as the manner in which it is presented. The pandemic also highlighted the perils of misinformation on social media, emphasizing the importance of media outlets in setting the record straight with accurate news.¹⁰ In countries where media reports were inconsistent, confusion prevailed, which ultimately undermined efforts to unify citizens in combating the virus. COVID-19 has illustrated the critical role that media outlets play in raising awareness, containing the spread of the virus, and minimizing panic and confusion among the public. It has also underscored the need for media outlets to remain impartial, avoid political biases, and prioritize scientific accuracy in their coverage of pandemics

CASE STUDY II: MEDIA COVERAGE OF FOOD SECURITY IN ETHIOPIA AND ERITREA CONFLICT

In this increasingly connected world, global media coverage can help portray national and local issues to a larger and often more influential global audience. This process is best characterized by the role of media coverage in highlighting the food insecurity facing civilians during the 1998 Eritrea and Ethiopian border war. The 1998-2000 war between Eritrea and Ethiopia was triggered by a dispute over their mutual border, which had never been officially delineated.¹ The crisis itself claimed an estimated 80,000 lives and displaced up to one million, but the economic issues to both countries significantly altered food security. Prior to war, the Horn of Africa had a long history of drought and drought-related famine. Ethiopia specifically had faced ten major drought-famine episodes in the four decades preceding the conflict.

Between 1991-1998, both countries experienced notable improvements in food security, as a result of economic production and profitability of agriculture (grain).² During the hostilities of the war in 1998, the production of grain and agricultural crops fell drastically, and ultimately led to a complete reversal of the trend in food production and security since 1991, affecting the most vulnerable populations, specifically displaced individuals. While this conflict was initially disregarded by international media, in the early 2000s the famine and food insecurity in the Horn, encompassing the Ethiopia and Eritrea regions, began to receive international media attention.³ The sudden 'discovery' of the food crisis by the media brought necessary attention to secure adequate funding to alleviate the food insecurity. Soon after these reports, donors accelerated food aid pledges and deliverables, effectively bypassing previous non-action policies. Nicknamed as the 'CNN effect', this crisis highlights the role of global media in successfully highlighting the famine and food insecurity during the Ethiopia-Eritrea crisis, ultimately forcing donors and international agencies to provide essential food deliverables and funding.⁴

CASE STUDY III: CITIZEN NARRATIVES IN SARAJEVO SIEGE

Media is often severely limited and lacking when operating within militarized conflict zones. However, in its absence, narratives have the ability to shape and portray the realities within these areas. Notable narratives exist from the Sarajevo Siege (1992). In April 1992 Sarajevo, the Bosnian Capital, was besieged by Bosnian Serb Nationalists, trapping civilians within. The occupation lasted for nearly three and a half years, resulting in significant civilian attacks like the Markale Market Massacre.⁵ While traditional media was unable to capture conditions within the region, Sotfic presents the abnormalities of being a citizen in the besieged city in *Cataldi's Letters from Sarajevo*. Exposing the need for basic resources, she writes of her and her family's experiences in facing significant food shortages. Not only does she mention the lack of food availability due to the conflict, but mentions how food acquisition presented its own troubles.⁶ Acquiring basic resources, like nutritious food, meant exposure to certain risks, like attacks from stray sniper fire in the streets. Therefore residents had to make nutritional adjustments, including the use of wild and semi-edible plants.^{7,8} Furthermore, she mentions how the government deliberately disrupted basic utilities, like water. Such an action resulted in a lack of availability of drinking water and a lack of proper sanitation. While traditional media sources in conflict zones are highly politicized and often unreliable, this case study demonstrates how civilian narratives can hold significance in displaying the personal experiences of individuals or groups in facing a lack of access to necessities, like food and water. Ultimately drawing attention to these deficits and driving national and international health policy decisions.⁸

OTHER RESOURCES:

- [Role and Influence of Media in Health Policy](#)
- [Understanding Implicit Bias](#)
- [Mass and Local Media Biases in Wartime Health](#)
- [Narrative Medicine in Wartime Health](#)
- [Issues of Narrative Medicine in Perpetuating Health Disinformation](#)
- [Journalism Ethics](#)

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