REPRESENTATIVE GUIDE
MEDIA

AMWHO

2026 AMWHO INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

Global Child and Adolescent Health: Protecting the Next Generation in a Time of Crisis

Introduction

In an era of global connectedness, information spreads rapidly. When used responsibly, information distribution platforms can coordinate our efforts to research interconnected public health problems. When information is easily disseminated, mis- and disinformation can cause inaccurate health recommendations to permeate through our institutions, if not immediately suppressed. Global media sources must act effectively and responsibly to counteract inaccuracies in public health messaging and expose the systems that allow them to continue operating.

Journalists and non-traditional employees of media companies uphold journalistic integrity, fairness, and accuracy daily. To mimic accuracy, you must, as a media representative, adhere to a strict code of ethics. Throughout the conference, feel free to challenge delegates on their intentions when they propose a plan. It is your responsibility to hold institutions accountable for the consequences of their decision-making. When composing your articles, note both the positive and negative components of a delegate's proposal, as well as the scientific literature on which their ideas are based.

As a media representative, you must use accurate terminology to convey ideas as clearly and as specifically as possible.

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Moreover, seek to maintain impartiality whenever possible. Political leanings and biases present in journalistic writing threaten the integrity and effectiveness of public health measures. Please balance accurately conveying information with clear, accessible language, avoiding complex terminology whenever possible.

However, each publication has its own focus and ideological leaning. Reflect on the values of the publication you represent when deciding which parties you associate with and collaborate with throughout the conference. Your role as a media representative will be integral to shaping public health policy and delegates' decision-making.

MEDIA'S ROLE IN CONFERENCE

You will be acting as a representative for this year's media organizations. Each of these actors was selected for their public health coverage and diversity in focus and political perspectives. You will interact with delegates to build newspaper articles that inform participants about the specific topics being addressed throughout the conference. You will also have the opportunity to participate in two press conferences with delegates, during which media representatives will be able to ask questions relating to proposed public health initiatives and question their motives. Quotes and content from these press conferences may be used to inform your articles.

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DELIVERABLES

To gauge your engagement throughout the conference, you will be required to submit 2 developed articles of 500-750 words, 2 shorter articles no longer than 500 words, and maintain **a Twitter account** throughout the conference. Each article you create will be published on your twitter and internal conference communication where all delegates can engage with your coverage.

Participating Media Organizations

VOX

Vox is a mainstream digital media organization that reports on the vaccination rates across the United States, the global obesity epidemic, social determinants of health, and other significant public health crises. They also distill complex health topics into digestible videos for the public, which describe the “why” of our public health crises, rather than merely the “what.”

THE NEW YORK TIMES

The New York Times has extensive coverage of sexual and reproductive health rights with a particular focus on the American reproductive healthcare landscape, a significant issue facing today’s youth. They also track vaccination rates across the country for both measles and coronavirus to communicate the effectiveness of public health responses to various illnesses nationwide.

BBC WORLD NEWS

BBC News has extensive coverage of international health affairs. Given their proximity to research hubs at Cambridge and Oxford, they frequently report on advances in adolescent health research. They also comment extensively on social determinants of health that affect adolescent medical outcomes.

Participating Media Organizations

REUTERS

Reuters is a mainstream, traditional news organization with extensive public health reporting. Their data-driven coverage allows the public to understand the direct impact that public health crises, including substance abuse and low vaccination rates, are having on adolescent success.

Case Studies

Detailed below are two significant examples of how mainstream news outlets and other media forms interacted with public health to generate positive outcomes. These case studies are intended to guide your understanding of how media can be a force for social change by mitigating misinformation, forcing actors to take accountability for missteps, and drawing attention to issues that receive less airtime. Mainstream news outlets and non-traditional media alike have the power to catalyze such an impact.

CASE STUDY 1: AMERICAN MEDIA'S REPORTING ON THE OPIOID CRISIS

The opioid epidemic remains pervasive in American life, with 73,000 people having died of overdoses in the 12 months ending in August 2025. The media coverage of the crisis greatly influences American perceptions of it, and increased public awareness of the epidemic can result in greater emphasis on developing and funding interventions. Thus, the media plays a dual role — highlighting the root of this public health crisis, while disseminating new solutions to the epidemic.

From 1998 to 2012, 51% of news stories covering the opioid crisis mentioned a solution to the epidemic.[14] Therefore, scientific journalism is emphasizing bringing solutions to the opioid crisis to light, permitting the public to debate the respective harms and benefits of various treatment mechanisms.

However, the pervasive scientific consensus at the time affects which solutions are spotlighted. Until 2012, the majority of the epidemic's coverage focused on criminal justice-oriented solutions, while more recently, coverage has concentrated on public health-oriented mechanisms to mitigate the crisis.[14] This demonstrates that news outlets have remained in line with the scientific community's solution consensus in their reporting. News segments have also acted to humanize those affected by the crisis, to minimize the stigma faced by drug addicts. In one study assessing television coverage of the epidemic from 2000 to 2020, 40% of surveyed segments conveyed personal stories of those touched by the crisis. An emotional connection between the viewer and a story can convince an audience to take action. The media can have a positive impact on the public's awareness of the harms of the opioid crisis and call attention to the most promising solutions, driving government funding.

CASE STUDY 2: GLOBAL COVERAGE OF THE OBESITY EPIDEMIC

In late 2025, the number of obese children surpassed the number of overweight ones, affecting 188 million youth around the globe.[11] This development marks a turning point in the global battle against obesity, renewing global efforts in managing the social determinants of health central to the disease's perpetuation.

Case Studies

However, public rhetoric about obesity has been a contributor to the stigma surrounding the disease, preventing research and development efforts to study populations most affected. The public health consensus regarding obesity points increasingly away from individual behaviors and more towards community factors, placing certain groups at a greater risk.[12] Inconsistent with this consensus, the public consciousness continues to hold the belief that "obesity is solely under personal control."[12] When such beliefs are perpetuated, they can stand in the way of necessary research to develop interventions for these groups at greater risk.

To mitigate the mainstream media's role in perpetuating such stigma, in 2024, the AP Stylebook adjusted its guidance on using terms "obesity, obese, overweight."[13] It advises against using these words as modifiers when describing subjects, also known as people-first language. It also recommends asking interviewees how they prefer to be described, as subjects have a range of preferred terms. Most of all, the guidance reminds writers to be conscious of their impact when describing subjects. Conscious efforts like these can ensure that obesity is treated as a public health crisis, rather than an individual's fault.

Conclusion

Media representatives are integral to holding policymakers accountable at AMWHO 2026. We hope this guide gives you a greater understanding of the role you will play. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to annagage@unc.edu. We are looking forward to meeting you soon!

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