

Current situation, problems and trends of health communication in China

Huaidong Meng

School of Literature and Media, Jingchu University of Technology, Jingmen, 448000, China

Keywords: Health communication in China; Current situation and problems; Trend research

Abstract: Health communication research in China since the beginning has been influenced by foreign health communication studies, during the course of 40 years of research, from slow to fast forward, and by the Chinese social environment and political environment, economic environment, cultural environment, is still in a no system theory and complete disciplinary institution stage. The research on health communication in China has always been highly practice-oriented, and the research of journalism and communication scholars has started in a shambling way. The research theme focuses on health education at the personal level of knowledge, attitude, behavior and interpersonal level. There are many researches on AIDS, which need urgent attention at the public policy level. Investigation method, controlled experiment and case study are most commonly used, but the proportion of normative research methods used by journalism and communication scholars is insufficient. This paper presents the development and academic layout of health communication research in mainland China in recent years, and uses content analysis method to make statistics and discussion on relevant literature from the aspects of main researchers, research topics and research methods. Summarized the present domestic health communication research in the new social environment, the reality environment and the development status of information environment changing trends and characteristics, as well as some of the problems that exist, and the future trend of research on health communication, through the empirical research of domestic health communication research and make a certain contribution to the development of discipline.

1. Introduction

With the development of medical technology and medical level, mankind has gradually overcome a large number of disease treatment difficulties. By the end of 1950s, smallpox, plague, cholera and other severe infectious diseases had basically disappeared in mainland China, and schistosomiasis, filariasis, hookworm disease, malaria and other diseases seriously harming people's health had also been effectively prevented [1]. However, in modern society, people are still facing a variety of health problems and health risks. Health communication research in China has always maintained a high practical application orientation, and professional practice and social demand drive the development of disciplinary research [2].

In the 1980s, the global AIDS epidemic objectively promoted related disease control and prevention work, and the practice and research aimed at AIDS health promotion and behavior change became an important content of health communication research in China [3]. The environmental pollution peculiar to modern society, such as the frequent occurrence of haze weather and some negative effects brought by the development of science and technology, are also constantly challenging and threatening people's life and health. Health communication is to promote the improvement of the quality of life and health of the whole society, transfer health knowledge and healthy life concept to the audience, and eventually guide the audience to take correct health actions to improve the health level and quality of life of the audience, which is of great significance for social development [3]. Specifically, health communication is a kind of behavior that transforms medical research results into public health knowledge, and through attitudinal and behavioral changes, aims to reduce the morbidity and mortality rate of diseases, and effectively improve the quality of life and health standards of a community or country. Research topics related to health communication cover a wide range of topics, including AIDS prevention as the leading disease prevention, drug abuse prevention, doctor-patient relationship research, birth planning, early

detection of cancer, smoking cessation, etc. [4].

2. The research background

2.1. Theoretical framework and conceptual interpretation of health communication

Communication is divided into political communication, economic communication, cultural communication, health communication, etc. [5]. As an important branch of communication research, health communication is based on the research results of many disciplines. The most direct theoretical sources of health communication are communication, medicine and education, and the birth of communication is the product of interdisciplinary research. It is closely connected with other social sciences and lies at the edge of multiple disciplines. In journalism, sociology, psychology, political science, information theory, cybernetics and system theory, linguistics and semiotics subject developed on the basis of an independent discipline, is the study of human information skills, information application and law science, the characteristics of the communication discipline more, make it belongs to belongs to the humanities and social sciences, And there are some characteristics of natural science [6].

In the 1970s, health communication in the United States was in its infancy and had a hot development trend, while health communication in China was just in its initial contact and learning period. In the 1970s, the development of health communication in the United States belongs to the embryonic stage of discipline, while in Taiwan, China, it belongs to the learning and introduction stage. Unfortunately, the research on health transmission in Mainland China at this time was completely blank and no trace could be found. Literature on health communication research has appeared in Taiwan since the 1960s, and related research topics are deeply influenced by European and American studies [7]. Once the new technology is involved in the media industry, it becomes a new field that researchers pay attention to and think about, and its impact, change and promotion on health communication are concerned by scholars [8]. The proportion of papers with new media was 14.78%. Health communication scholars pay attention to the role of new media in guiding public opinion in social public health events and use the Internet to conduct questionnaire surveys. However, compared with the impact of the Internet on the media industry, the role of technological progress in this field as the most revolutionary and driving factor in the development of the media industry has not been reflected. The search results of literatures to be analyzed are shown in Table 1

Table 1 Search results of literatures to be analyzed

Keywords	Full text search item	Keyword search item	Number of literature after screening
Health communication	2361	461	344
Health information communication	48	1	34
Health risk communication	7	2	5
Total	2416	926	383

2.2. Study motivation and purpose

The study of health communication is a cognitive study of human response to health risks. For the definition of health communication, there is no unified title in the academic circle at present, and different researchers have made different interpretations of health communication according to their own research orientation [9]. As the birthplace of sociology and modern communication, the United States has regarded health and medical treatment as a social problem and used corresponding means to solve it since the 1940s. Early American sociological studies had a tradition of pragmatism and functionalism, so they paid close attention to social issues such as health and medical treatment. In the 1960s, the US economy reached a stage of unprecedented post-war prosperity and rose to become the world's number one economic power.

At the same time, various contradictions have become increasingly prominent, the gap between

the rich and the poor has intensified, and social problems have emerged one after another. As the provision and distribution of medical service resources closely related to everyone's life, there has been a serious imbalance. The campaigns of "schistosomiasis control", "family planning", "poliomyelitis prevention" and "Correct View of AIDS" carried out in China in the 20th century can be regarded as the early practical activities in the field of health communication in mainland China. On the other hand, it has a history of several decades for the health circle and the media in China to introduce health and health knowledge through newspapers and other mass media [10]. Communication channels and modes are also the main research topics. It is noteworthy that in mainland China, since the birth of health communication research, there has been a long-term absence of communication scholars and it has continued to the 21st century. Such absence is not conducive to the formation of sound theoretical attention, diversified research topics and research methods, and seriously affects the establishment of health communication disciplines in the mainland. The word frequency analysis results of sample paper titles are shown in Table 2.

Table 2 Word frequency analysis results of sample paper titles

Healthy	332	Spread	248	Study	88
Education	30	Sanitativeness	31	Public	25
Communication	20	Strategy	24	Application	27
Effect	25	Survey	19	China	18
Television	19	Development	19	Mass	17

3. Review of research at home and abroad

3.1. Research topic dilemma

In today's high-risk modern post-industrial society, the risks from politics, economy, health, ethics, culture, science and technology and mass media are endless and overlapping. In the era of high risk, the necessity of health communication research gradually emerged in public health problems, so both domestic and foreign health communication research was first proposed in public health problems. The topic of health communication research in China became rich from SARS in 2003. Looking at the composition of health communication researchers in the United States, they mainly come from four fields. Researchers from medical departments of colleges and universities and practitioners from medical and health institutions are the main forces of health communication research in the United States, accounting for almost 50%. Communication scholars are the second largest group engaged in health communication research, accounting for about 25% of the total researchers. Researchers in the fields of pedagogy and sociology and researchers from comprehensive universities also account for about 25% of the total researchers. "The continuous participation of professional communication researchers promotes the continuous improvement of health communication research in the United States.

According to relevant scholars' research, although the practice of health communication in mainland China was carried out earlier, the theoretical discussion on health communication did not happen until the 1990s. From 2017 to 2018, most of the academic papers on health communication in mainland China were published on "China Health Education", a professional journal of the health system, but no researchers specializing in journalism and communication in mainland China systematically focused on the field of health communication. Therefore, the people engaged in health communication in mainland China are mainly medical and health workers with medical professional background. In recent years, scholars of journalism and communication in mainland China have published research papers on health communication, analyzing the role of mass media in the field of health communication in different topics such as AIDS, tobacco control, depression and doctor-patient relationship.

3.2. Current situation and trend of health communication research

Among the numerous issues in health communication research, there are two major categories of

issues, one is health awareness oriented research issues, the other is communication awareness oriented research issues. Correspondingly, in terms of composition of researchers, researchers in the field of health and communication also constitute the main body of health communication researchers. This feature is common in health communication research at home and abroad. At present, the innovative practice of health communication mainly occurs in new media, medical field, various functional places, schools, workplaces, communities, and major health events, so it is urgent to shape the innovative research on health communication. "Two micro ends" : WeChat, weibo, mobile client and new media, such as the short video the screen now people's leisure time, to mobilize more social forces to participate in the health knowledge popularization, to actively promote "Internet + accurate health science" new media health communication, using the Internet + and 5 g models to build the entire media health science knowledge distribution and transmission mechanism, Strengthen the guidance and supervision of health education content.

Although it has been more than 40 years since the rise of health communication in the United States, the real large-scale research has been done in the last 20 years. Scholars have different opinions on the specific content of health communication research, and their research interests are different. At present, most of the researches on health communication in China focus on the study of communication effects and the reporting and editing of news media. As an important branch of communication science, health communication is a multidisciplinary field with many research breakthrough points and great potential.

4. Conclusions

Health is borderless, and health risks are global. We have seen the panic caused by SARS, A/H1N1 and other sudden infectious diseases around the world. Environmental problems such as oil pollution and nuclear leakage are not local problems, but may have a major international impact. In today's world, health communication research presents an international pattern dominated by the United States and dominated by Europe and The United States. Other countries and regions in the world are more or less influenced by the United States in health communication research. After analyzing the current research status, changing characteristics and existing problems of health communication in mainland China, this study also discusses the future development trend of health communication research: the future health communication research should break the barriers between disciplines, integrate multidisciplinary forces, and strengthen the health communication subject ontology research; Promote the construction of specialized organizations, cultivate core talents, and promote the specialization of health communication research; The government should strengthen support and integrate resources from all walks of life to promote the development of health communication research.

Acknowledgements

Supported by teaching research project of Jingchu Institute of Technology, Research on the characteristic construction of network and new media specialty in applied undergraduate colleges—Taking the network and new media major of Jingchu Institute of Technology as an example (JX2022-036)

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