Communication, Organization and COVID-19

Crisis and Risk Communication and COVID-19: Observations and Research in Progress

The COVID-19 pandemic is the worse public health crisis since the 1918 Influenza pandemic. Credible estimates predict over 400,000 US deaths before widespread vaccination. The pandemic created a period of disruption, confusion, uncertainty, conflicting health messages, denial of the disease's severity, and efforts to control the data. Communication of health information and persuasive messages targeting interventions such as masks and social distancing were primary methods of disease management.

This presentation offers general observations about the COVID-19 pandemic and the larger communication ecosystem. In addition, preliminary reports of two ongoing research projects are described. “Communicating Death and Dying in The COVID 19 Pandemic” explores the processes and challenge of reporting and communicating mortality and morbidity data. “Higher Education’s Crisis Management: Challenges and Initial Lessons Learned from the COVID-19 Pandemic” draws on 55 interviews with senior management in US colleges and universities.

These and other investigations create a picture of COVID 19 as nested, cascading and wicked problem, requiring multidisciplinary approaches for an informed, coordinated and effective response.