



**HARVARD
T.H. CHAN**

SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH
Center for Health Communication

2023-2024

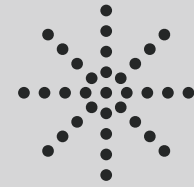
ANNUAL IMPACT



REPORT



A MESSAGE FROM OUR DIRECTOR



In 2022, with the COVID-19 pandemic underscoring the urgent need for improvements in health communication, the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health rebooted its storied Center for Health Communication.

Its new mission: To equip public health leaders of all kinds to credibly communicate health information in an increasingly skeptical, fragmented, and noisy world.

Two years in, the Center is well on its way to achieving that mission. We've introduced popular—and practical—health communication courses. A slate of hands-on workshops, seminars, and other supports for cultivating health communication skills. Promising new public health-content creator collaborations for countering the health misinformation that so often pervades social media. And an innovative new research agenda to define best practice for such work with creators.

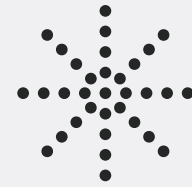


Read on for more, as well as what's ahead in 2024-2025. We hope you'll leave inspired to join our growing community of health and science communicators—and maybe even to subscribe to our [Call to Action newsletter](#) for more practical health and science communication tips.

Amanda Yarnell

Senior Director, Center for Health
Communication

THE YEAR IN REVIEW



500

People who learned from the expert communicators we brought to campus

11,000

Views of the resources in our health communication library

55

Harvard students who enrolled in our new communications classes

1300+

Followers of our social media channels

1000+

Subscribers to our newsletter, [Call to Action](#)

10+

Articles about our work in the popular and academic press

500

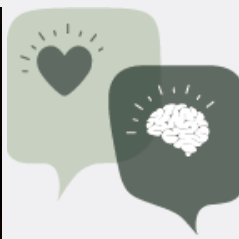
Creators exposed to our mental health communication training materials

12M+

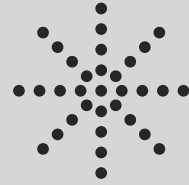
Total audience reached by the creators who attended the Creators Summit on Mental Health @ Harvard

730

Constituent messages generated by the public health campaign created by one such creator and HSPH



EXPANDED COURSEWORK



This year we dramatically enriched the health communication curriculum at Harvard Chan School, with a focus on teaching our students practical skills.

Accomplishments

Launched SBS 285 | Practical Communication Strategies and Tactics for Influencing a Healthier World, taught by Burness founder and CEO Andy Burness.

Launched SBS 225 | Engaging the Press: A Practical Look at Health Communication, taught by former news executive and ProPublica founder Dick Tofel.

Injected new communication modules into existing classes, for example a module for Global Health and Population Masters students on drafting and delivering a compelling elevator pitch about your research.

What to watch for

- a new class on public speaking
- a version of our strategic communication course for online-MPH students
- a new communications module on presenting your science to broad audiences

COMMUNICATION SKILL-BUILDING



This year we helped hundreds of students connect with expert health communicators and build health communications skills via our seminars, hands-on workshops, growing resource library, newsletter, and social channels.

Accomplishments

Held hands-on workshops on social video and digital safety.

Brought a steady stream of expert communication practitioners on campus to share their expertise.

Piloted a health-journalist-in-residence position to offer monthly health journalism critique sessions that help students sharpen their storytelling skills.

Published and disseminated new health-communication resources on engaging journalists, digital safety, elevator pitches, and more.

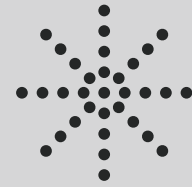
Key collaborators: Stanford Health Equity Media Fellowship and Harvard Chan's Health Communication Concentration

What to watch for

- Expanded social media workshops
- 1:1 communications support on subjects like digital safety and preparing for media interviews
- New LGBTQ Health Voices fellowship in partnership with Harvard's new LGBTQ Health Center of Excellence

CREATOR COLLABORATIVES TO COUNTER MISINFORMATION

In an era where more and more of us are getting health news and information from social media, creators are poised to help public health counter misinformation and disseminate evidence-based science that will better serve our collective wellbeing. This year we scaled up our efforts to equip them to do so.



Accomplishments

Held Creators Summit on Mental Health @ HSPH to deepen engagement with creators who participated in our virtual April 2023 creator briefings.

Cultivated a deeply engaged standing community of leading mental health creators committed to improving online mental health information ecosystems.

Demonstrated that creator-led public health campaigns can fuel efforts to enact policy change.

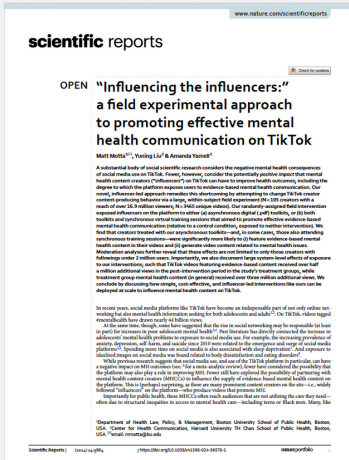
Scaled access to our virtual creator briefings/toolkits to 10x as many creators.

Key collaborators: Project Healthy Minds, Active Minds, MTV, YouTube Health

What to watch for

- A regular series of creator briefings and toolkits on mental health communication
- Activation of our vibrant creator community at in person events

DEFINING BEST PRACTICE



Building on the Center’s rich history, we hope to define the public health campaign playbook for a media environment in which so many of us are watching TikTok or Instagram rather than TV. This year, our research revealed simple, scalable interventions that can “influence the influencers” to spread evidence-based health information on social platforms.



Accomplishments

Published results of our field study of creator behavior showing that our interventions can indeed “influence the influencers” and the amount and visibility of evidence-based mental health content on TikTok.

Launched a meetup for Harvard community members who want to do health communication research.

Introduced a new health communication research practicum at Social Currant, a leading influencer marketing firm.

What to watch for

New research answering questions like

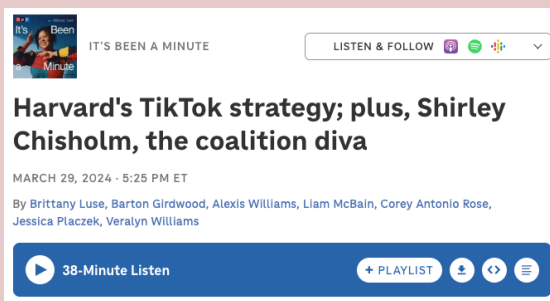
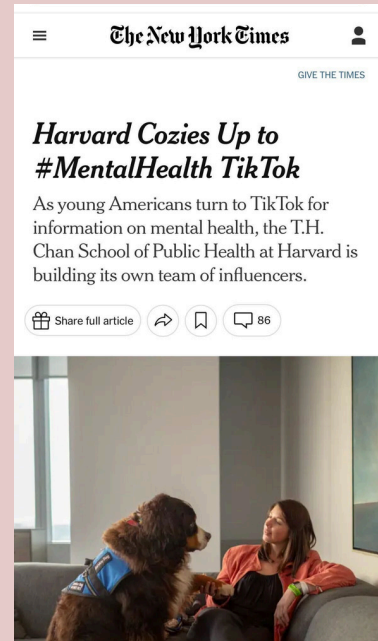
- How does influencing creators’ content influence their audiences’ beliefs and behaviors?
- What are the most scalable and effective formats for connecting creators with health evidence?
- How does convening creators influence their beliefs and behaviors as health communicators?

Key collaborators: Social Currant

MEDIA COVERAGE OF OUR WORK

“For a few months this spring, **the influencers became part of a field experiment**, in which social scientists attempted to inject evidence-based content into their feeds.”

- Ellen Barry for the New York Times

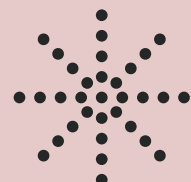


“Faculty have poured their lives, their souls into research...But only, like, a very tiny part of that process is about how to get the science out to the people who pay for it in the first place...Media journalists have their role in disseminating this information, and creators, too.”

- Creator Kate Speer on NPR's It's Been a Minute

“A creative program at Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health is trying to flip the script by influencing the influencers on TikTok, Instagram and YouTube. Given the monumental task, **we need more experiments like this.**”

- Lisa Jarvis for Bloomberg





OUR TEAM

When the Center rebooted in 2022, we had a staff of one. This year we began to build the team necessary to deliver on our ambitious goal of preparing public health leaders of all kinds—including today’s media gatekeepers—to credibly communicate health and science evidence in an increasingly skeptical and fractured world.

- Hired full-time communications coordinator Elissa Scherer.
- Recruited leading health communication practitioners Dick Tofel and Andy Burness to teach Center classes.
- Welcomed marketing exec Kate Speer to our team part time to help us scale up our creator briefings and toolkits.
- Welcomed a talented group of current students and recent alumni to our student advisory board to ensure our programs and services are rooted in student needs.

Get in touch with us at chc@hsph.harvard.edu

