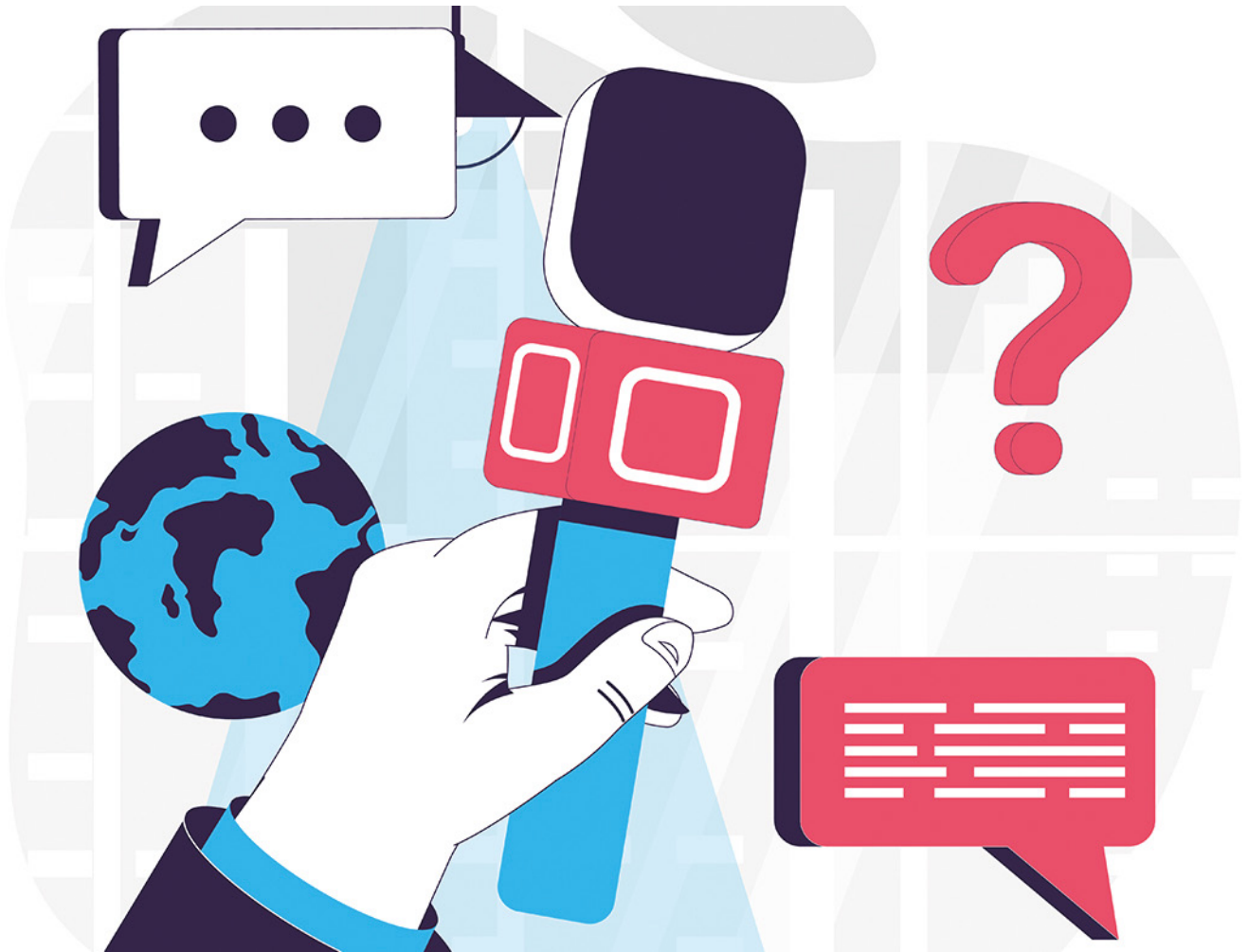


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The Role of Modern Journalism in the Dissemination of Information About Diabetes

Diabetes is a chronic disease that affects millions of people worldwide and remains a significant public health challenge. It is often referred to as a silent disease because it does not manifest symptoms or cause pain like others. Socially, it is also silent because, despite its prevalence, society's understanding of the condition is extremely limited. However, I believe there is a great opportunity to improve communication about this condition.

Information today is more accessible than ever. We no longer search for news; news now finds us. Information reaches us through various media, and the role of journalism in disseminating accurate and relevant information about diabetes is more crucial than ever.

In this article, we will explore in detail the role of journalism in spreading awareness about diabetes in today's society, identifying bad practices to avoid and proposing strategies for effectively informing society about this disease.

ACCURATE AND EDUCATIONAL INFORMATION

Although it is not always the case, when we speak of journalism, we should aim to convey accurate, verified, and educational information. Through thorough research, expert interviews, and consulting reliable sources, journalists can provide society with a clear understanding of the risk factors, symptoms, diagnosis, and treatment options for diabetes. According to a study by Smith et al. (2019), disseminating accurate and educational information about diabetes through the media can significantly contribute to greater public awareness of the disease and a better understanding of preventive and management measures.

However, this often does not happen. We live in a time when, although the information may appear serious, it is often intentional, and as readers or viewers, we often find it difficult to identify whether this information is correct or erroneous. We saw this clearly during the pandemic when rumors—intentional or not—caused widespread health alerts.

In this regard, and despite its importance, diabetes journalism can be affected by some bad practices that distort information or contribute to misinformation. Some of these bad practices include:

Sensationalism

Exaggerating the risks or benefits of certain treatments or products can create fear or false expectations among the public. The media often talk about the cure for diabetes, ignoring the impact it may have on the

hopes and dreams of people with diabetes. I confess that I, too, would like to deliver that news someday, but it is not yet the time for such reports, despite science getting closer.

Stigmatization

Negative or stereotyped representations of people with diabetes can perpetuate prejudice and discrimination, making it harder for people to gain social acceptance and support. In this field, journalism faces a major challenge—educating society and conveying the everyday reality of people with diabetes. People with diabetes can eat sugar, they can exercise, and they do not get diabetes from eating too many sweets. These are some of the many social stigmas that journalism has not yet been able to dismantle. Journalism and media outlets like cinema have ignored the reality of being a person with diabetes for years.

At this point, it is crucial to remember that a person with diabetes can eat anything as long as they manage their treatment, and that sports are not only possible but recommended. Fortunately, we live in an era where medical treatments and technology are gradually improving the quality of life for people with diabetes, making it as similar as possible to that of people without diabetes.

Lack of scientific rigor

Disseminating unverified information or information based on insufficient evidence can confuse the public and undermine the credibility of the information. This malpractice exists today mainly due to the urgency of breaking news and the lack of time to verify information in newsrooms. The media today focus on clicks, the visits generated by a catchy headline, even if it lacks rigor. This is the current economic model of many media outlets. Don't let the truth ruin a good story, a quote from the 1964 movie *Sex and the single girl*, directed by Richard Quine, perfectly encapsulates what we live today.

Regarding diabetes, it is important to remember that each person is unique, and no two cases of diabetes are alike. A common malpractice in the media is confusing and mixing information about type 1 and type 2 diabetes mellitus without differentiating between the two. Although they share many »

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BY REPORTING ON RISK FACTORS AND PREVENTIVE MEASURES, MEDIA OUTLETS CAN HELP ALERT THE POPULATION TO THE IMPORTANCE OF ADOPTING A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE AND UNDERGOING REGULAR CHECKUPS TO DETECT DIABETES IN ITS EARLY STAGES



» similarities, the way the information should be treated should be distinct.

AWARENESS AND PREVENTION:

In any case, the need for education and information for people with diabetes positions journalism as a great ally, since this discipline within the communication sciences also plays an important role in raising awareness about diabetes and promoting prevention. By informing the public about risk factors and preventive measures, the media can help alert the population about the importance of adopting a healthy lifestyle and undergoing regular exams to detect diabetes in its early stages. Beyond whether it is newsworthy or not, one of the principles of journalism that we have forgotten as a society is its educational capacity.

According to an article by the World Health Organization (WHO) (2020), education and public awareness are key components of diabetes prevention strategies, and journalism plays a fundamental role in disseminating this information to society.

SUPPORT AND EMPOWERMENT:

In addition to providing information, journalism can offer support and empowerment to people with diabetes and their families. Through inspiring stories, personal testimonials, and useful resources, the media can help people feel less alone in their struggle with the disease and find the support they need to cope effectively.

According to a study by García et al. (2018), success stories and testimonials from people living with diabetes can have a positive impact on patients' self-esteem and motivation, and journalism plays an important role in spreading these stories. It does not have »



» the same impact to inform the public about the millions of people with diabetes worldwide as it does to say that Tom Hanks, Halle Berry, or the Spanish model, Laura Sánchez, have diabetes. Naming names helps drive the idea of creating social awareness.

In conclusion, journalism plays a crucial role in disseminating information about diabetes in today's society. By highlighting success stories, identifying bad practices, and proposing strategies for effective communication, journalists can significantly contribute to increasing

awareness and understanding of diabetes, promoting prevention and proper care, and improving the quality of life for those affected by this disease.

With a focus on precision, clarity, and empowerment, journalism can be a powerful tool to fight diabetes and improve public health in Spain and beyond. It is essential that the media recognize their responsibility and leverage their potential to inform accurately and ethically about diabetes, contributing to a better understanding and management of this disease in today's society. **D**

CONCLUSION

Journalism is a discipline very much needed in these times in which we live. Understanding, distributing, and analyzing information from rigor and science is an opportunity we should not miss in raising awareness about diabetes. Scientific societies, patient associations, health care professionals, and institutions related to diabetes should receive training on the basic principles of journalism to be able to decipher its codes, understand them, and apply them. As Tom Foremski, the Financial Times correspondent in Silicon Valley, said in 2010, every company is a media company. If we apply journalistic techniques in their entirety, we can create messages and content that help people understand a pathology like diabetes in all its forms, as if we were a media outlet in potential.

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