



HeaRT Literature Research Portugal

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State-of-the-Art Report Portugal

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2. Mostly/Under-reported issues

When it comes to mostly reported issues in health, and looking at the period between 2008 and 2010, the most frequent themes are: Health Policies; Case Histories; Risk/Alarm Situations; and Research. Through the three year analysis, the amount of news on Health Policies decreases and Case Histories' news pieces increase. This is probably because the year of 2009 is atypical, due to Influenza A outbreak, and news on Risk/Alarm Situations were the most common ones. As for newspapers, the daily broadsheet "Público" has more news pieces on Health Policies and Clinical Acts; "Expresso", a weekly broadsheet, also makes an extensive coverage of Health Policies, followed by Research and Health Economics; as for "Jornal de Notícias", the only popular newspaper analyzed, Health Policies' stories are also the most covered ones. The trend is similar in all three newspapers analyzed in this research (Lopes, 2011).

As for under-reported issues, our analysis shows that Prevention, Health Economics and Clinical Acts are undervalued by journalists when covering health. When it comes to Prevention it was a surprise, since the year of 2009 was characterized by a Influenza A outbreak and we would expect journalists to make more news on how to prevent the virus. Health Economics and Clinical Acts are news, but they do not deserve the same news coverage as Policies or Case Histories: hence, they are under-reported themes.

Since this is a three year analysis, the year of 2010 is characterized by several themes, although it shows a low variety of topics within those. Case Histories, Health Policies and Health Economics are the dominant themes in 2010, due to specific topics that were covered by journalists. Case Histories include a variety of sub-topics, as National or International days of a certain disease; analysis of statistic data; or a comparison of Portugal and other countries when it comes to a certain disease and its development. The year of 2010 also shows a great amount of coverage on political decisions, due to the reorganization of Oncology Services in Portugal. There was a great discussion on this topic, promoted by a small group of official sources and politics from different political parties. When it comes to Health Economics, this theme was news due to public sector finances and the pharmaceutical area. Health journalists in Portugal do not seem to be worried about health private sector, although they write a lot about money. But when they do so they write about debts or budget cuts.

3. Sources of Information

Health Journalism is made mostly through news sources, since there are not many news pieces without sources. However, the number of sources is not very large: newspapers usually quote one or two sources, promoting a kind of news sources “brotherhood”. Sources are usually identified (more than 75% of times), and it seems that journalists do not appreciate the resource to anonymous sources. There are a lot of non-identified sources, meaning sources we do not know the name but we know their status (they come from a University or the Ministry of Health).

As for the characterization of sources, they are mostly male and there is a significant percentage of group sources: doctors, researchers, etc. Health journalists in Portugal seem to privilege national sources over international ones. But when they quote international sources, they usually quote European or Northern-American ones.

Sources within health field are the most common ones when reporting about health in the Portuguese press. Official sources are also the most quoted ones, followed by specialized sources. These last ones are more valuable when they talk on behalf of a group, meaning when they are institutional. An individual source, even though specialized, does not seem to be very important to journalists. Official sources are usually politics, hospital administrators or people who fill in governmental jobs. Quoted sources are not a diverse group.

Health journalism’s preferences are organized news sources, due to their ability in giving ready-made information; health journalists often rely on other media, since information is ready to “consume”. This reality promotes Bourdieu’s circular structure of information (Bourdieu, 1997). This is more evident on daily newspapers, since weekly ones usually prefer new information and cannot rely on other media to give them news.

While some sources are privileged by health journalists, others are never quoted. Nurses or the common citizen as a potential user of health services are not usually quoted by journalists when covering health. Nurses are almost never quoted, even though they may be news. With the exception of Case Histories which describe personal stories, newspapers do not elect common citizen or patient as their main source of information.

6. Health Journalism Education

When it comes to Health Journalism Education in Portugal, there are two master courses available in Health Communication: one at a public university (University of Lisbon) and one at a private university (Aberta University). Then there are some opportunities in crash courses or post-graduate. University of Coimbra had an edition, in 2005, of a one-semester post-graduate in Medicine and Health Journalism; and at the same university there was a 2 or more day seminar of Legal and Forensic Medicine (one edition in 2007, another in 2008 and the last one was in 2009). The Centre for Journalists' Education (CENJOR) also promoted an edition of a one-day seminar of Health Journalism, in 2007; and the National Board of Doctors offered a 1-day seminar entitled Medicine and the Media both in 2008 and 2009. The main purpose of this course was to bring together journalists and doctors so that they could both learn from each other.

In Portugal, there is not much research in Health Communication. When it comes to research projects there are three main ones:

- “Elements for a news theory. Case analysis on Portuguese media coverage of a social problem, HIV/AIDS” (coordinated by Nelson Traquina): this project is part of a thorough analysis of AIDS news discourse;
- “SER – Health Network” (coordinated by Rita Espanha): the relationship between health and Information and Communication Technologies in the networked society context;
- “Disease in the news” (coordinated by Felisbela Lopes): news themes and news sources organization in health news articles.

These projects are not simultaneous in time and therefore do not complete each other. One chooses a disease (AIDS) as the main part of the research, the other one looks into health from digital platforms, and the last one tries to explain the newsmaking process. These projects are developed in different research centres, geographically apart, and have been financed by the Portuguese Agency for Science and Technology (FCT).

These different research lines produced two PhD theses:

- Santos, Rogério (2002) “Journalists and news sources – HIV/AIDS news as a case study”
- Espanha, Rita (2009), “Autonomy projects on a transition society: Media and Health”, Lisboa, ISCTE-IUL

Related to both the projects and the theses there are two books:

- Santos, Rogério (2006). *The source did not want to declare*. Campo das Letras. This book analyses the relationship between journalists and news sources, looking into AIDS news articles. The author tries to explain how newsrooms and journalists work, as well as researching the agenda-setting process.
- Traquina, Nelson et al (2001). *Portuguese Journalism in a case analysis*. Caminho. This book collects texts from several academics that study journalism. There is a literature review on news sources and journalists, and a report on several case studies. We highlight the HIV/AIDS problematic.

The book *Clinical Files* (2002, Dom Quixote), from the journalist Cláudia Borges, is disconnected from the academic field and reflects the events that were shown in a TV program with the same name. This program was launched in August 9th 1998 by SIC (private TV news channel). It presented a new format, innovative, aimed at showing a well-succeeded medicine in treating anonymous citizens' diseases. It used to mix news features and debate, following up cases of severe diseases with successful treatment stories. Cláudia Borges, the journalist who coordinated and presented those emissions, was from the opinion that it was a way of filling in a void when it comes to TV news. Moreover, it would show a theme people are concerned about.

When it comes to scientific papers, we can highlight four main groups:

I – Analysis of AIDS news coverage:

Traquina, Nelson (2000). “Portuguese journalism and HIV/AIDS problematic: na exploratory study”. *Communication and Languages Journal*, nº24.

Traquina, Nelson (2004), "AIDS in the news: case study of the news coverage in *Diário de Notícias* and *Correio da Manhã*" in *Media & Journalism Journal*, nº5.

Ponte, Cristina (s/d), "Epidemics news coverage in the Portuguese press. HIV/AIDS case." in BOCC

The project coordinated by Nelson Traquina resulted in several articles on HIV/AIDS problematic and its representations in news coverage, signed by Nelson Traquina, Cristina Ponte and Ana Cabrera.

. The article "Epidemics news coverage in the Portuguese press. HIV/AIDS case." Shows partial results from the discourse analysis of AIDS news coverage in two Portuguese newspapers, *Diário de Notícias* and *Correio da Manhã*, between 1981 and 2000.

The analysis is centered on news stories titles and shows the idea of control and security's illusion. The discourse is supported by official sources and shows an almost total absence of alternative voices, such as the common citizen as a potential HIV carrier.

In the article "AIDS in the news: case study of the news coverage in *Diário de Notícias* and *Correio da Manhã*" (2004), Nelson Traquina shows the final results of HIV/AIDS news coverage research. He analyzed the daily newspapers mentioned above, for a period of 20 years. The author refers the differences and similarities between a reference and a popular newspaper. As for the similarities, Traquina highlights the same news-values in this theme, namely the proximity, infraction, time factor, death and whether the person presented in the news is known or not. As for the differences, the author says *Diário de Notícias* pays more attention to the biomedical "story" and news features, while *Correio da Manhã* highlights the epidemics "story" and sex/celebrities news stories.

II – Research on the relationship between health and ICTs:

Espanha, Rita e Cardoso, Gustavo (2009), "Electronic Health and e-health practices in Portugal", in JANUS 2009 – Civilizations Alliance: A possible pathway and world health, UAL & Público, Lisboa

Espanha, Rita (2009), "Networking Health", in Interface Public Administration Journal, nº 49, Lisboa.

Espanha, Rita and Lupiañez-Villanueva, Francisco (2009), "Health and the Internet: Autonomy of the User", in Cardoso, Cheong and Cole (Eds.) (2009), World Wide Internet – Changing Societies, Economies and Cultures, Ed. University of Macau, Macau

Espanha, Rita (2008) Jul 2. Internet and Health Contents. Observatorio (OBS*) [Online] 2:3. Available: <http://www.obs.obercom.pt/index.php/obs/article/view/228>

Espanha, Rita e Gustavo Cardoso (coords.) (2007), Online Health Contents: Google, www and Blogs, Lisboa, CIES/ISCTE (final report).

Espanha, Rita (2010), "Information and communication technologies on health" in Simões, Jorge (2010) (Coord.) 30 Years of National Health Service – a commented pathway, Almedina: Coimbra

Espanha, Rita (2009), Health and Communication in a network society – the Portuguese case, ed. Monitor, Lisboa

Espanha, Rita (2009), "Health in Communication", In Cardoso, Gustavo, Cádima, F.R. and Landerset Cardoso, L. (Coord.), Media, Networks and Communication: Present Futures, Lisboa: Quimera

Espanha, Rita (2009), Autonomy projects on a transition society: Media and Health, PhD thesis, Lisboa, ISCTE-IUL

These articles were written by Rita Espanha and some of them were also jointly written by Gustavo Cardoso. They result from a study developed within the research project described above, aiming at identifying and understanding information and

communication practices for individual management of health problematic. Specially the construction and development of individual autonomic processes within the health field.

Information and communication technologies make people autonomous in relation to their social and individual background, allowing an escape from traditional control. Therefore, they face modern society's contradictions without forgetting the relevance of communication networks in constructing new social movements. In her PhD thesis, Rita Espanha (2009) thinks on information and communication daily practices and their meaning in the individual management of health problems. The way ICTs are shaped by individual needs and social contexts, especially when it comes to health communication. Individual health management never involved so much information as nowadays, since there is a wide range of medical and health information from several sources (from specialized sources to the common citizen). The author studies health issues related to internet use, in the Portuguese case.

III – Analysis of health newsmaking process in the press:

Lopes, F, Ruão, T, Marinho, S, “Influenza A in Portuguese Press: a disease in the news through strategic communication” . Observatório (OBS*), Vol 4, No 4 (2010)

Marinho, S, Lopes, F, Ruão, T, Coelho, Zara “Analysing disease in the news: first portrait”, Publication of the CICOM Congress Communication, Cognition and Media Proceedings, 2010

Ruão, T,; Lopes, F.; Marinho, S.; Araújo, R. (2011) “Media Relations and Health news coverage: the dialogue on influenza A in Portugal”, Conference Proceedings, ECREA – Organizational and Strategic Communication, University of Covilhã – Portugal.

Health in general, and diseases in particular, are a major topic in journalism. They fulfill a somewhat extensive space in the media sphere and have a considerable impact in news sources and target audience. Yet, we do not know much about the newsmaking process and the way sources organize themselves and their perceptions on what is

published. Mainly in Portugal. A group of researchers from the Communications department at University of Minho is developing a project in which “disease in the news” is studied (Lopes et al, 2010).

Through the analysis of three Portuguese newspapers (*Público*, *Jornal de Notícias* and *Expresso*), the goal is to understand the news coverage of diseases. Through 2009, Influenza A was the most covered disease. In order to contribute to the understanding of a media coverage that World Health Organization declared to be a pandemic, the research was centered in sources quoted in Influenza A news articles. The corpus included news articles published in three national newspapers, as explained above, that were chosen for their different periodicity and editorial line. They analyzed 655 news stories and who were the sources journalists talked to. The researchers came to the conclusion that this was a media “pandemic”. Neither the number of international predicted deaths was confirmed nor the continuous discourse of calm at a national level was an evidence. Through the analyzed articles, the speech is dominated by official sources who, both inside and outside the country, organized a risk communication that used journalistic speech in order to transmit “pseudo events”. There was a media “pandemic” that had troubles surviving outside the media. Nonetheless, during a year it was news thanks to the action of sophisticated news sources.