Opportunities and Challenges for Communicating Nutrition and Health:

Guidelines for Communicating the Emerging Science of Dietary Components for Health

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International Food Information Council (IFIC) and IFIC Foundation

Mission:
To communicate science-based information on food safety and nutrition to health professionals, educators, government officials, journalists and others providing information to consumers.

Primarily supported by the food, beverage, and agricultural industries.
ODS Strategic Plan 2004-2005

“Goal 5. Expand and conduct outreach efforts that inform and educate the public, healthcare providers, and scientists about the benefits and risks of dietary supplements.”
Today’s Presentation

• Consumer Attitudes

• Considerations for Communicating Emerging Science of Dietary Components

• Opportunities for Collaboration on Outreach Efforts
Consumer Confusion

60% of food shoppers say there is too much conflicting information about nutrition.

FMI Shopping for Health, 2004
Today's Random Medical News

Can Cause

According to a report released today...

©4/27/97 Jim Borgman, Cincinnati Enquirer
Challenges of Communicating the Functions of Dietary Components to Consumers

• No “magic bullets”...dietary components should be part of healthful diet and lifestyle

• Balance increased consumption of beneficial components within proper caloric intake for healthful weight

• Communicate who would benefit from an increase or decrease of a given component
Why is communicating effectively about emerging science so important?
93% believe certain foods have health benefits that may reduce the risk of disease or other health concern

IFIC 2002
Consumers Want to Learn More

85% of consumers are interested in learning more about the health benefits offered by functional foods.

IFIC 2002
Addressing the Challenges and Opportunities

Communicate Food-Related Science in Ways that Serve Both Public Understanding and the Objectives of the Communicators
Communicating the Emerging Science of Dietary Components for Health

GOALS:

1. Raise the bar on how health professionals, journalists, and other opinion leaders communicate the benefits of functional foods/dietary components.

2. Better describe the state of the science on any given food or nutrition issue.

3. Develop and document guidelines to be used as tools to help influencers interpret emerging science.
Building on Success...
Harvard School of Public Health/IFIC Foundation

• *Journal of the National Cancer Institute*, February 4, 1998

• *Journal of the American Medical Association*, February 11, 1998
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**Partners**
IFIC Foundation
Institute of Food Technologists

**Advisory Committee**
Agricultural Research Service, USDA
American Academy of Family Physicians
American Heart Association
Centre for Food and Health Studies
Federal Trade Commission
Food and Drug Administration
Foundation for American Communications
Missouri School of Journalism, MU
National Cancer Institute, NIH
Office of Dietary Supplements, NIH

University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign
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Purdue University
Purdue University
Robert Mondavi Institute, UC Davis
Rutgers University
St. Joseph’s University
Tufts Health and Nutrition Letter
Tufts School of Medicine and Nutrition
University of Southern California
University of Massachusetts
University of Missouri, Columbia
University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign
Audience

Primary audiences:
• Journalists
• Health Professionals

Other Communicators:
• Science Writers
• Educators
• Research Scientists
• Food Industry Marketers and Scientists
Communicating the Emerging Science of Dietary Components for Health

1. Enhance the public understanding of foods, food components, and/or dietary supplements and their role in a healthful lifestyle. 
   **Serve up plain talk about food and health.**

2. Clearly convey the differences between emerging science and consensus science. **Scientific research is evolutionary…NOT revolutionary.**

3. Communicate with accuracy and balance. **Carefully craft your communications.**
Communicating the Emerging Science of Dietary Components for Health

4. Put new findings into context needed for an individual to make dietary decisions. *Make your messages meaningful.*

5. Disclose all key details about a particular study. *Cite the study specifics.*

6. Consider peer-review status. *Point out the peer-review process.*

7. Assess the objectivity of research. *Consider the full facts.*
IFIC Foundation and IFT Guidelines for Communicating the Emerging Science of Dietary Components for Health

March 2005
http://ific.org/nutrition/functional/guidelines
Collaboration on Consumer Communications

**Supplement Savvy Partnership**

“What Dietary Supplements Are You Taking?”

Partnership Among Several Federal Agencies and Other Non-Federal Organizations
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Challenges of Communicating Emerging Science to the Public

• Convey research as continuum; not isolated studies

• Communicate the latest scientific findings with balance

• Provide context: how do new findings fit with existing evidence?

• Explain completely new field of research/ technology & complex terminology