Changing the Course of Nurses’ Under-Representation in Health News Media

Diana J. Mason, PhD, RN, FAAN
Senior Policy Service Professor
Center for Health Policy and Media Engagement

Carole Myers, PhD, RN, FAAN
Professor, University of Tennessee College of Nursing
Senior Fellow, George Washington University Center for Health Policy and Media Engagement
Overview

• Woodhull Study Revisited
• Strategies you can use to increase your visibility in health news media and the visibility of your research.
Background

• Diversity in journalism: newsrooms, topics and sources
• Women’s Media Center and Global Media Monitoring Project: women in journalism
  o 24% of newsroom
  o 36% of sources in news stories
• Nurses: largest group of health professionals; 90% women
• To what extent are nurses used as sources for health-related news stories?
Woodhull Study Revisited

• Original Study in 1997: The Woodhull Study on Nurses and the Media: Health Care’s Invisible Partner
• Nancy Woodhull, a founding editor of USA Today
• 7 newspapers; 3 news weeklies;
  3 trade publications
• Key finding: Nurses were invisible in health news media
Nurses were rarely quoted in healthcare news

In 1997,
4% in newspapers
1% in weeklies and industry publications
Impact of the IOM Report, The Future of Nursing?
Phase 1. The Woodhull Study Revisited: Nurses’ Representation in Health News Media 20 Years Later: Journal of Nursing Scholarship, September 2018

- Diana J. Mason, PhD, RN, FAAN, Senior Policy Service Professor, GWU School of Nursing Center for Health Policy and Media Engagement
- Laura Nixon, MPH, Senior Media Researcher, Berkeley Media Studies Group
- Barbara Glickstein, MPH, RN, Director of Communications and Media Projects, GWU School of Nursing Center for Health Policy and Media Engagement
- Sarah Han, BA, Research Associate, Berkeley Media Studies Group
- Laura Cutler, BA, Research Associate, Berkeley Media Studies Group
- Kristi Westphal, PhD, RN, Senior Fellow, GWU SON Center for Health Policy and Media Engagement
Print news analysis methods

Sources
- Newspapers (7), weeklies (3), healthcare industry publications (3)

September 1997
- 2,234 articles

September 2017
- 537 articles (random sample)
Nurses rarely quoted in healthcare news*

In 1997,
- 4% in newspapers
- 1% in weeklies and industry publications

*Difference is not statistically significant
Nurses rarely quoted in healthcare news*

In 1997,
4% in newspapers
1% in weeklies and industry publications

In 2017,
2% in newspapers and weeklies
1% in industry publications

*Difference is not statistically significant
When Were Nurses Used as Sources?

• On nursing issues: e.g. APRN scope of practice
Nurses mainly quoted about the nursing profession

"There has been an erosion of respect. We have to dispel that notion that being assaulted is just ‘part of the job’. It is not."

~Pam Cipriano, President of the American Nurses Association

Nurse Elise Wilson was stabbed multiple times in July by a patient unhappy with his medical care.
Nurses were absent from stories about policy
Where nurses *do* appear or are mentioned

Stories about healthcare quality and public health

“…Pairing a primary-care physician with a registered nurse, two medical assistants and a nurse practitioner or a resident physician has led to better management of chronic conditions and reduced reliance on the emergency department....”

**Modern Healthcare**

*Editorial: Healthcare Transformation 2.0*

By Aurora Aguilera | September 30, 2017
Female sources are underrepresented

1997

Women: 25%
Men: 75%

2017

Women: 34%
Men: 65%
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ROLES</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>(%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Policymakers</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patients/Families</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unidentified Clinicians</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physicians</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nurses</strong></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educators</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researchers</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celebrities</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paraprofessionals</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEOS/Administrators</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-medical healthcare</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Both</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Nurses and women are underrepresented in images

Politicians, white males, patients and families, and unidentified clinicians in white coats or scrubs
Limitations

• Nurses are likely represented as sources at a higher level because editorial styles remain a barrier.

• Nonetheless, editorial styles have not changed much in 20 years, so comparisons with the original study are likely valid.

• This study examined only the print sources used in the original Woodhull study. Future research should examine online health news media.
Conclusion

Nurses remain invisible in health news stories.
Phase 2. Health Journalists’ Experiences with Using Nurses as Sources
American Journal of Nursing, October 2018

• Diana J. Mason, PhD, RN, FAAN, Senior Policy Service Professor, GWU School of Nursing Center for Health Policy and Media Engagement

• Barbara Glickstein, MPH, RN, Director of Communications and Media Projects, GW School of Nursing Center for Health Policy and Media Engagement

• Kristi Westphaln, PhD, RN, Senior Fellow, GWU SON Center for Health Policy and Media Engagement
What do health journalists perceive to be the barriers and facilitators to using nurses as sources in new stories?
Methods

• Qualitative; semi-structured interviews
• Snowballing technique
• 10 health news journalists; 2 were men
• Telephone interviews recorded, 30 to 60 minutes
• Transcribed
• Individual researcher analysis, discussion and consensus on themes
Overall Theme

Biases about women, nurses, and positions of authority in health care impede journalists’ use of diverse sources in health reporting.
Subthemes
• Editorial biases, policies and processes can get in the way of using nurses as sources.
• Editorial biases, policies and processes can get in the way of using nurses as sources.

• **Journalists don’t fully understand the range of nurses’ roles, work, and education.**
• Editorial biases, policies and processes can get in the way of using nurses as sources.

• Journalists don’t fully understand the range of nurses’ roles, work, and education.

• **Journalists don’t know how to find nurses to interview and have limited time to track them down.**
• Editorial biases, policies and processes can get in the way of using nurses as sources.

• Journalists don’t fully understand the range of nurses’ roles, work, and education.

• Journalists don’t know how to find nurses to interview and have limited time to track them down.

• Communications staff of health care organizations and universities aren’t offering nurses as sources unless journalists ask for them.
• Editorial biases, policies and processes can get in the way of using nurses as sources.

• Journalists don’t fully understand the range of nurses’ roles, work, and education.

• Journalists don’t know how to find nurses to interview and have limited time to track them down.

• Communications staff of health care organizations and universities aren’t offering nurses as sources unless journalists ask for them.

• **Nurses and nursing organizations aren’t being strategic about accessing and engaging journalists.**
Funders

Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
Beatrice Renfield Foundation
**Sigma Theta Tau International**
American Association of Critical-Care Nurses
Donald and Barbara Jonas Foundation
National League for Nursing
Wolters Kluwer Health
On Course Learning
American Association of Colleges of Nursing
American Organization of Nurse Executives
Changing the Story:

Enhancing Media Engagement Among Nurses and Nursing Organizations
Active Engagement

Media Competencies

Individual

Organizational
Mapping a Course

- Craft three key messages
- Align key messages with purpose and audience
- Identify your target audience
- Identify what you want to communicate and why
- Select best media
- Issue call to action
www.go.gwu.edu/Woodhull

Diana J. Mason, PhD, RN, FAAN
djmasonrn@gmail.com

Carol R. Myers, PhD, RN, FAAN
cmyers9@utk.edu