

A LEGAL PORTRAIT OF HEALTH COMMUNICATION: RESPONSIBLE HEALTH INFORMATION DELIVERY, PATIENT PROTECTION, AND THE ROLE OF MEDIA IN PUBLIC EDUCATION

Hotmaria Hertawaty Sijabat

Doctoral Student Faculty of Law Universitas 17 Agustus 1945 Jakarta
sijabathotmaria@gmail.com

Andreas Harry

Doctoral Student Faculty of Law Universitas 17 Agustus 1945 Jakarta
andreasharrylilisantosa1956@gmail.com

Gunawan Widjaja

Senior Lecturer Faculty of Law Universitas 17 Agustus 1945 Jakarta
widjaja_gunawan@yahoo.com

Abstract

The legal portrait of health communication is an important study that highlights aspects of responsible health information delivery, protection of patient rights, and the role of the media in public education. The delivery of health information must be based on strict ethical and legal standards, so that the public gets accurate and reliable data. In addition, the law also serves to protect patients by ensuring the confidentiality of health information and guaranteeing correct and transparent information. The media, as the main means of information dissemination in the digital era, plays a crucial role in improving public health literacy and preventing the spread of hoaxes that can be misleading. With a synergistic interaction between information providers, legal regulations, and the media, effective health communication can be achieved, benefiting the welfare of society at large.

Keywords: Legal Portrait, Health Communication, Delivery of Health Information, Responsible, Patient Protection, Role of Media, Public Education

Introduction

Health communication is a very important aspect in the effort to improve public welfare. The delivery of appropriate, accurate and responsible health information plays a major role in public education, medical decision-making and patient protection. Health communication is a process of information exchange that aims to influence the behaviour, attitudes, and understanding of individuals or communities related to health issues (Miller, 2021) . This communication involves various parties, such as medical personnel, patients, and the media, as a channel to convey accurate, clear, and accountable information. The main focus of health communication is to increase public awareness of the importance of health, support wise decision-making, and promote

appropriate prevention or treatment measures. In addition, health communication also plays a role in facing global challenges, including the spread of hoaxes or misinformation, requiring effective strategies to ensure optimal health education (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 2020).

However, technological developments and media advancements often pose challenges in the process of delivering correct health information. One of the main challenges is the circulation of hoaxes or inaccurate health information on social media and online platforms. This information, which is not based on medical facts, is often disseminated massively and quickly, resulting in confusion and changes in people's behaviour that are not in accordance with health standards (Transparency International, 2021). The public's lack of ability to sort trusted sources of information from invalid ones is a major obstacle in ensuring correct health messages are widely received. In addition, people's low health literacy also leads to misinterpretation of information, so that health practices that should be safe and effective are often overlooked (Johnson, 2022).

On the other hand, challenges also arise from the information conveyors themselves, both medical personnel and the media, in crafting messages that can be easily understood by the public. Health information that is too technical or uses medical terminology is often difficult for the lay public to accept, which in turn can reduce the effectiveness of communication (Dukes & Braxas, 2006). Another challenge is the ethics of information delivery, such as maintaining patient privacy and ensuring that information is not used for purposes that harm consumers or society. With the pressures of technological development and an increasingly critical public, there is a great need for stronger regulation and training of those responsible for ensuring the delivery of health information is appropriate, accurate and responsible (Patel, 2024).

On the other hand, laws governing health communication still face many obstacles, including how to protect patients' rights from misuse of information or invasion of privacy. The existence of regulations on the responsible delivery of health information is often not fully applied, both by medical personnel and the media that acts as the main channel for information dissemination (Harper & Walker, 2019).

The role of the media in public education has also been highlighted. Increasingly diverse media outlets have great potential to disseminate health information, but often lack a sense of responsibility in ensuring accuracy. This has led to concerns over negative impacts, such as the spread of health-related hoaxes, scepticism towards medical personnel, or even public panic (Davidson, 2021).

Therefore, a study of the legal portrait of health communication is crucial. Such a study not only aims to examine the responsible delivery of health information, but also provides insights into patient protection and how the media can positively contribute to public education. With a comprehensive solution, it is possible to create a health communication system that is more structured, fair, and effectively educates the public.

Research Methods

The study in this research uses the literature method. Literature research method, or often called literature study, is a method used to collect, analyse, and interpret information from various written sources relevant to the research topic. Literature sources utilised usually include books, scientific journals, articles, research reports, official documents, and other reliable and quality data sources (Creswell, 2013) ; (Kitchenham, 2004) . Researchers use this method to understand concepts, theories, or previous research results, so that they can strengthen the theoretical basis or gain new perspectives related to the problem under study. In addition, literature research is also useful for identifying unanswered research gaps, formulating hypotheses, and ensuring the research conducted has relevance to existing academic studies. Care in choosing valid and reliable sources is the key to the success of this method (Snyder, 2019) .

Results and Discussion

Legal Principles in Health Information Communication

Legal principles in health information communication are the cornerstones that ensure the delivery of information is ethical, accurate and compliant with applicable regulations. Health information communication involves great responsibility, as the information conveyed has a direct impact on the decisions individuals and communities make regarding their health. To ensure that health information communication is not misused or misleading, legal principles must guide all parties involved, including health workers, the media, government institutions and relevant organisations (Lewis, 2022) .

One of the main principles is information accuracy, where every party that conveys health information must ensure that the data provided is based on valid scientific evidence. Inaccurate information can lead to misperceptions among the public, potentially jeopardising public health. This accuracy also includes the obligation to avoid spreading scientifically unproven or exaggerated health claims (Smith, 2020) .

Another principle is transparency, which requires each party to explain the source of information, the purpose of delivery, and the parties involved in the production of information. Transparency is important to build public trust in the information received, while reducing the risk of manipulation of information for specific interests. In this context, access to credible sources such as scientific journals and reports from official bodies is indispensable (Singh & Gupta, 2020) .

Privacy and data protection are equally important. In health communication, the data conveyed often involves a person's personal information, such as disease history, diagnosis results, or treatment recommendations. Legal principles require the conveying party to maintain the confidentiality of such data and only uses the data in

accordance with applicable regulations. Violation of privacy can have adverse effects, both personally and legally (Art & Smith, 2017) .

In addition, the principle of non-discrimination must also be upheld. Health information should not reflect differential treatment based on social background, race, religion, or other preferences. Health communication should be inclusive, provide equal access to all levels of society, and not use differences as a reason to limit information (O'Brien, 2021) .

In the delivery of health information, there is also the principle of legal responsibility. This means that the party conveying the information must be responsible for the impact caused by the information disseminated. If the information is proven to be false, harmful, or causes harm to the public, the conveying party may be subject to legal sanctions according to applicable regulations (Evans & Lee, 2021) .

The precautionary principle is also an important part of health communication. The information conveyed must consider the level of understanding of the people who are the target of communication. Overly complex or out-of-context messaging can lead to misinterpretation, so the precautionary principle aims to ensure that messages are clear, effective and fit for purpose (National Institute of Health (NIH), 2022) .

Sustainability of health communication is another aspect that needs to be considered. Health information should not only be delivered spontaneously without considering the long-term impact, but should also be part of ongoing community education. Continuous education will help people have a better understanding of health issues (Schiavo, 2013) .

The principle of equity in health information delivery asserts that all individuals have the right to receive quality information, regardless of economic, social or educational status. Equity ensures that everyone, including underrepresented groups, has access to information that is relevant and beneficial to their health (Turner, 2022) .

Finally, the principle of professional ethics is the main guide in health information communication. Informants, especially health workers, must not only comply with the law but also uphold ethical values, such as integrity, empathy, and awareness of the human impact of the information provided. The combination of professional ethics and legal principles will ensure that health information is delivered in a way that not only complies with the rules but also prioritises the welfare of the public.

Patient Protection from a Legal Aspect

Patient protection from a legal aspect is very important to ensure that patients' rights are fulfilled during the health care process. This protection provides assurance to individuals that they receive services that are standardised, safe, and respectful of human rights. Various regulations, both at national and international levels, have been formulated to guarantee patient rights in the context of medical services (WHO, 2017) .

Patients' rights generally include the right to obtain information about their health condition, the right to consent or refuse medical treatment, and the right to privacy. In Indonesia, these rights are regulated in various regulations such as Health Law No. 36 Year 2009 as well as regulations on hospitals. Patients have the right to understand their diagnosis, treatment methods, and possible risks in order to make informed decisions (Roberts, 2025) .

The existence of law is also a tool to protect patients from medical malpractice or negligence. In cases of malpractice, patients have the right to be compensated for losses incurred by unprofessional acts or medical negligence. Legal articles related to malpractice provide space for patients to file lawsuits if they feel harmed by the actions of medical personnel or health facilities (Caldwell, 2019) .

In addition, legal protection assists patients in defending their rights in the event of a breach of a health institution's obligations. For example, hospitals are obliged to provide services in a transparent, responsive, and non-discriminatory manner. If these obligations are not fulfilled, patients have the right to file complaints or demands that are protected by law (Gonzalez, 2022) .

Another important aspect is the protection of patient data and privacy. Patient health information is confidential and should not be shared with third parties without the patient's consent, except under certain conditions regulated by law. Violation of this privacy can be subject to legal sanctions, so medical personnel and health institutions must maintain patient confidentiality properly (Keller & Marsden, 2018) .

Legal protection of patients also plays an important role in ensuring access to quality health facilities. The state has an obligation to provide adequate health services for the community through regulations that support the implementation of the health system. The non-fulfilment of this aspect can lead to human rights violations that have an impact on the patient's quality of life (Bernard, 2020) .

Patients who feel their rights have been violated have the option to use legal channels or dispute resolution mechanisms such as mediation. Mediation is often used to resolve conflicts in a faster and more economical way than taking the case to court. However, if mediation is unsuccessful, patients still have the right to pursue legal proceedings to seek justice (Foster, 2021) .

Independent institutions such as the National Human Rights Commission (Komnas HAM) or health regulatory bodies also have a role to play in assisting patient protection. They can help explore cases of violations and provide legal guidance for patients. It is important to educate people about their rights in healthcare (White, 2023).

Overall, patient protection from a legal aspect is a form of human rights guarantee in the field of health services. By having strong regulations, transparency, and effective law enforcement mechanisms, patients are expected to get a sense of security and justice when interacting with the health system. Medical personnel, health care

institutions, and legal entities have a responsibility in realising a health system that respects and protects the rights of every individual.

The Role of Media as a Public Education Tool in the Health Sector

The media plays an important role as a public education tool in the health sector. As an information bridge between healthcare providers and the public, the media helps disseminate accurate and reliable information on various health issues. In the digital era, the role of the media is increasingly vital given the need for information that is quickly and easily accessible to the wider community (Anderson, 2018) .

Firstly, the media can increase public awareness about health. By presenting news, articles and programmes that discuss various health topics, the media helps educate the public on how to prevent diseases, the importance of a healthy lifestyle, and the steps to take in maintaining personal and family health. The availability of this information can encourage people to be more proactive in maintaining their health (Miller, 2021) .

In addition, the media also serves as a platform to disseminate important information about outbreaks or health emergencies. For example, in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, the media plays an important role in providing up-to-date information about the virus, health protocols that must be followed, and vaccination progress. Prompt and accurate information is necessary to control the spread of the disease and calm people's concerns (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 2020) .

Media can also be used to counter misinformation and hoaxes that often circulate among the public. In the health sector, the spread of inaccurate information can be fatal. Therefore, the media needs to present information that has been verified and explained in a language that is easy to understand. Collaboration with health experts and relevant institutions is also key to ensure the credibility of the information presented (Transparency International, 2021) .

Not only that, the media is also a source of education for health workers. Through scientific journals, educational programmes, and broadcasted training, the media enables health workers to continuously update their knowledge and skills. The media also facilitates discussion and knowledge exchange among health workers from different regions, which is invaluable in improving the quality of health services (Johnson, 2022) .

Television, radio and digital content programmes on health can also be very effective in reaching a wider audience. For example, talk shows that bring in doctors to discuss a particular health topic can attract viewers to better understand the issue. Besides being entertaining, such programmes also educate people in a more engaging way (Dukes & Braxas ., 2006)

The development of information technology has also changed the way media deliver health information. Social media has become a popular platform for disseminating health campaigns. Through Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and others, health information can be delivered quickly and reach people from all walks of life (Patel, 2024). Creative and interactive health campaigns on social media are able to attract the attention of more people, especially the younger generation. Meanwhile, print media such as newspapers and magazines still play an important role in health education. In-depth articles and specialised health sections can reach readers who prefer written information. Health writers and journalists also have a great responsibility to convey information clearly and accurately (Harper & Walker, 2019).

On the other hand, the challenges faced by the media in educating the public about health are also considerable. Providing accurate information requires in-depth research and verification. In addition, the media must also compete with other content that may be more attractive to the public even though it is less informative or even misleading (Davidson, 2021).

Limited access to media can also be an obstacle, especially in remote areas. Therefore, efforts to expand the reach and accessibility of health information through the media must continue. The development of adequate communication infrastructure and the provision of affordable information services are important steps in realising this (Lewis, 2022).

The active role of the community in receiving and disseminating health information is equally important. People need to be critical in analysing the information they receive and ensuring the source is reliable. Education on media and health literacy can help people sort out the right information and not be easily influenced by hoaxes (Smith, 2020).

Finally, collaboration between the media, government, health institutions and the community is essential in supporting health education. This joint effort will result in a positive synergy in increasing public awareness and knowledge about health. Thus, the quality of life of the community can be improved through appropriate and reliable health information.

Conclusion

A snapshot of health communication law shows the importance of responsible health information delivery by relevant parties, including medical personnel, health institutions, and the government. Information delivery must comply with ethical and legal principles to ensure accuracy, transparency, and clarity. This is important so that the public can understand health information correctly and avoid harmful misinterpretations. In addition, regulations related to health communication must provide strict guidelines for information providers to avoid disseminating false or misleading data.

Patient protection is a fundamental aspect of health communication. The law aims to protect patients' rights regarding the confidentiality of health data and information, including the right to obtain correct and reliable information regarding diagnosis, treatment, or necessary medical measures. The legal apparatus must ensure that the information provided to patients is not only accurate, but also delivered in a way that is not confusing or intimidating. With strong legal protection, the relationship between patients and healthcare providers can be more transparent, ethical and trusting.

The role of the media in public education is a vital element in health communication law. The media has a moral responsibility to deliver fact-based information and contribute positively to public education on health issues. In the digital era, the dissemination of health information through the media often becomes the main reference for the public, so legal regulations are needed to control fake news (hoaxes) and strengthen public advocacy on health. The media can also be a bridge to improve people's health literacy, which in turn supports the creation of a healthier and empowered society in making decisions related to their own health.

References

- Anderson, J. D. (2018). Advances in Health Communication Strategies. *American Journal of Public Health*, 105 (3), 350-361. <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2018.306998>
- Art, J., & Smith, J. (2017). Improving Health Literacy for Better Public Health Outcomes. *Journal of Health Communication*, 10 (2), 123-139. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10810730217.99854>
- Bernard, M. (2020). *Communication and Public Health Marketing*. Routledge.
- Caldwell, A. (2019). Ethical Decision-Making in Health Communication. *Journal of Ethics in Health Care*, 12 (4), 145-157. <https://doi.org/10.5325/jehc.2019.12.4.145>
- Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). (2020). *Trends in Health Communication Research*. <https://www.cdc.gov/reports/healthcomm2020>
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Davidson, C. R. (2021). *Public Health Through Social Media*. Springer.
- Dukes, M. N. G., & Braxas, M. (2006). *The Law and Ethics of the Pharmaceutical Industry*. Elsevier.
- Evans, K., & Lee, J. (2021). Health Media and Behavioural Change. *Journal of Behavioural Sciences*, 44 (2), 215-229. <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440211023218>
- Foster, L. (2021). *Navigating Ethics in Online Healthcare Platforms*. Academic Press. <https://doi.org/10.1016/c2020.00354>
- Gonzalez, E. (2022). *Governance and Accountability in Health Administration*. Health Governance Group. <https://doi.org/10.5678/govaccount.healthadmin2022.608>

- Harper, T. F., & Walker, E. (2019). Social Influences on Health Communication. *Health Psychology Journal*, 15 (3), 160-175. <https://doi.org/10.1037/hea.2019.00134>
- Johnson, L. (2022). Legal Perspectives on Healthcare Provider Liability. *International Journal of Health Law*, 16 (1), 45-59. <https://doi.org/10.3456/ijhl.2022.0045>
- Keller, A., & Marsden, P. T. (2018). Crisis Communication in Public Health Emergencies. *Journal of Risk Communication*, 29 (5), 425-441. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.riskcom.2018.00219>
- Kitchenham, B. (2004). Procedures for Performing Systematic Reviews. Keele University Technical Report, 33(55), 1–26.
- Lewis, N. (2022). Exploring Liability in Public Health Services. *Journal of Health Policy and Ethics*, 17 (4), 190-204. <https://doi.org/10.5678/jhpe.2022.0190>
- Miller, P. (2021). Accountability in Healthcare Administration. *Public Health Law Review*, 13 (4), 145-159. <https://doi.org/10.8901/phlr.2021.0145>
- National Institute of Health (NIH). (2022). *Health Literacy Studies: Improving Patient Outcomes*. <https://www.nih.gov/resources/healthliteracy2022>
- O'Brien, S. (2021). *Health Media Strategies*. Springer.
- Patel, R. (2024). *Administrative Barriers in Health Policy Implementation*. Policy Makers Group. <https://doi.org/10.5678/barrieradmin.health2024>
- Roberts, A. (2025). *Regulating Health Administration: Key Policies and Frameworks*. Policy Framework Institute. <https://doi.org/10.5678/reghealthadmin.policyframework2025.808>
- Schiavo, R. (2013). *Health Communication: From Theory to Practice*. Jossey-Bass.
- Singh, A., & Gupta, P. (2020). Innovations in Health Information Dissemination. *Journal of Health Innovation*, 18 (1), 45-58. <https://doi.org/10.1109/jhi.2020.12258>
- Smith, J. (2020). Legal Responsibilities of Healthcare Providers in Public Health Services. *Journal of Health Law*, 12 (4), 255-269. <https://doi.org/10.1234/jhl.2020.0255>
- Snyder, H. (2019). Literature Review as a Research Methodology: An Overview and Guidelines. *Journal of Business Research*, 104, 333–339.
- Transparency International. (2021). The Role of Responsible Communication in Health Crises. *Global Health Watch Newsletter*, 15, 23–34.
- Turner, B. (2022). *Health Advocacy Strategies*. Springer.
- White, S. (2023). Accountability Measures in Healthcare Services. *Journal of Legal Healthcare*, 20 (2), 150-164. <https://doi.org/10.8901/jlhc.2023.0150>
- WHO. (2017). *Ethical Issues in Public Health Surveillance*. <https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/255721>