

How to make nutrition science more accessible? Three top facts & tips for effective communication



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With the rising burden of malnutrition, including undernutrition, obesity and micronutrient deficiencies, and digital information overload as an aggravating factor, communication of accurate and actionable nutrition advice remains both necessary and challenging. In a webinar hosted by the [Nutrition Society](#), Dr Milka Sokolović, Head of Food & Health science at EUFIC, shared her best practices and tips to educate nutritionists and practitioners on the role of communication in science.

Well communicated, science translates into “digestible” and actionable messages that can reach different audiences through suitable channels, creating a foundation to understand and use nutrition information.

“To drive healthier diet choices, we must communicate nutrition science in a way that is appealing, engaging and actionable. Nutritionists need to be where the discussion is and talk ‘with’ rather than ‘at’ people, turning communication into a powerful tool to inspire lifestyle changes”, said Dr Sokolović.

During the webinar, she shared three critical facts and tips for effective nutrition science communication:

1. Complexity of Nutrition Science

Communication of nutrition science is limited by the evolutionary nature of science, the diversity of information sources with different agendas, and the cognitive limitations of people to interpret messages. Communicating nutrition science should therefore:

- rely on the established practice of science communication
- make sure to target the efforts to specific audiences
- involve communication professionals, as well as psychology and behavior specialists.

2. Effective Messages

People's willingness to process nutrition information depends on their attitude, lifestyle and socio-demographics. Overwhelming and conflicting information in the digital nutrition landscape hardly helps: it leads to confusion, fear, ignorance, boredom, and decrease in public trust.

Hence, communicating about nutrition clearly is not enough - to be effective, information needs to be communicated cleverly, while not shying away from emotions.

To communicate nutrition science effectively, messages must:

- be practical, simple and appealing
- consider cultural, economic and sustainability aspects of food choice
- be tested, developed, taken up, monitored and evaluated
- be targeted to identified and segmented audiences, with the fitting types of content and communication channels
- encourage behavior change by specifying when to act, embedding emotional triggers and focusing on simple and positive messages

3. Engaging Key Stakeholders

To ensure the necessary impact of nutrition science (communication), it is important for nutritionists to involve other key stakeholders who play an important role in the uptake and dissemination of those messages:

- scientists: to explain research in easy terms;
- journalists: to ensure high standards for reporting of nutritional science;
- NGO's: to create a level playing field;
- industry & governments: to ensure consistent nutrition labeling;
- public health authorities: to ensure that communication experts are included in advisory groups, to incorporate nutrition education into schools curricula, and to make science literacy a priority for all people.

Attended mainly by nutrition professionals, the webinar led to a discussion on what communication tools

and approaches can prove instrumental in counteracting the overwhelming misinformation in the public debate and in regaining trust in nutrition science.

For the coming six months, the webinar can be assessed as a recording at the [website](#) of the Nutrition Society.