Fighting pandemics with enhanced risk communication?
Shipping in a Tempest off a Rocky Coast.

Bonaventura Peeters
Risk Communication = multi-way exchange to support risk/benefit decisions (Way et al. 2020)
Effective risk communication is challenging (Bouder & Löfstedt 2010, Avrai & Rivers III 2013)

What happens when we forget about risk communication?

Neglects perceptions (Fischhoff et al. 1978, Slovic 1987), biases (Kahneman & Tversky 1979) and feelings (Slovic 2000), Trust (Slovic 1993, Renn & Levine 1991, Löfstedt 2005)

Overestimate behavioural change (Way et al. 2020)

Disconnects acceptance from life impacts (Fischhoff 1978; Bouder et al. 2007)
Covid19 raises issues about science and science communication

“Follow the Science” (Mercuri 2020) Yet which science? Modellers only?

Better standards of science needed (Rugeri er al 2020)

Evolving advice e.g. on face covering (Shapiro & Bouder 2020)

Media and social networks: amplification and attenuation (Kasperson et al. 1988; Pidgeon et al. 2003)
Challenging moments in risk communication

In early phase high levels of uncertainty and complexity (Aven and Bouder 2020): who is most at risk? risk management or precaution?

Risk assessment: unprecedented effort to generate real time data, plagued with glitches and controversies (e.g. hydroxychloroquine)

Risk management: Variations in governance model: UK SAGE model? Swedish agency model?
Considerable variations in risk management decisions: quarantines, testing, face covering, counting ...

How to communicate real life experiments- e.g. lockdowns.
Have we neglected the long term health impacts, for example on mental health (UCL Study)?
Risk Communication and pandemics

Things we have learnt from past pandemics

• Connect the views and actions of risk experts with those of the general public” (Burton-Jeangros, 2019, p. 109)
• Exchanging critical knowledge to support decision-making (Fischhoff et al. 2017)

Things we are learning from this pandemic

• Social norms as key variable (Goldberg et al. 2020)
• Variations across age groups (Bruine de Bruin 2020; Way et al. 2020)
• People’s disagreements about the risks, variations in perceptions of the need for protective behaviours (Bruine de Bruin & Bennett 2020)
• Have we put facts before feelings? - Susceptibility to misinformation (Roozenbeek et al. 2020)
Vaccines solve it all?

- Who receives the vaccine?
- What are the safety checks?
- Who is responsible if something goes wrong?
- Financial implications?
Vaccine risk communication demands as multi-way approach (Holt et al. 2016)

Since May, fewer Americans overall say they would get a COVID-19 vaccine when it becomes available

If and when a coronavirus vaccine becomes available, will you get vaccinated? (% who say “yes”)

- US Adults
- Democrats
- Independents
- Republicans

45%
Percentage of Americans who say they won’t get a coronavirus vaccine (19%) or they’re not sure (26%)

Yahoo News/YouGov poll

US concerns that Trump will rush to approve a vaccine before election is playing into wider safety fears


Greer McVay insists she is “not an anti-vaxxer — not at all”. She is up to date with her own immunisations and had her son vaccinated when he was a child. But she fears the development of a vaccine for coronavirus is being dangerously rushed, in part to improve Donald Trump’s prospects ahead of the presidential election in November.

“This situation is different, because of the politics that have been injected into the process and the speed at which they’re developing the vaccines,” says Ms
Fighting pandemics with enhanced risk communication: Messages, compliance and vulnerability during the COVID-19 outbreak

WP1: Comparing Risk communication strategies June 2020 - May 2021

WP2: Comparing compliance June 2020 - May 2021

WP3: Gendered dimensions of pandemic risk communication Jan 2021 - Dec 2021

WP4: Comparative study and recommendations Jan 2021 - Mar 2022

WP5: Management, communication and dissemination. June 2020-May 2022
The survey Instrument (focusing on 1st wave)

- **Risk Perception and behaviour**
  How people rate and interpret the different kinds of risks related to the Covid-19 pandemic?

  What do they do with these interpretations in actual life, including the advice they follow or not?

- **Channels of communication Issues**
  Where do people get their information from and how satisfied they are with it?

  How experts and governments communicated risk?

- **Adjustments and impacts on lives**
  How did people adjust their behaviour in this unusual period?

  What was the impact on individual behaviour and social relations, including in the family?

- **Demographics**
Survey: we take inspiration from the “Mental model Approach” (Morgan et al. 1994)
Take home lessons

- One of the most challenging environments
- Risk Communication more than ever needed
- More evidence needed: too many untested communications (Fischhoff 2013)
- Learn from past pandemics and generate risk communication science
- No magic bullet: Vaccines won’t solve it all
Thank you for your time!
Questions?