Reconstructing Health Communication in the Digital Intelligence Era: A Review of the 8th International Conference on Medicine, Humanity, and Media

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Abstract

The 8th International Conference on "Medicine, Humanity, and Media", organized by the School of Journalism and Communication at Peking University, took place from July 6 to July 11, 2025. The conference centred on the theme "Reconstructing Health Communication in the Digital Intelligence Era." Scholars and experts from over 60 universities and research institutions convened to discuss the rapidly evolving field of health communication in response to advances in artificial intelligence (AI) and digital media technologies. Notably, the integration of doctoral forum marked an innovative aspect of this year's symposium. Additional activities, including summer course lectures, poster presentations, workshop, university colloquiums, and high-table dialogues, fostered extensive academic exchanges.

Keywords

health communication, digital, artificial intelligence, media technologies

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On July 6, 2025, the 8th International Conference & PHD Symposium on "Medicine, Humanity, and Media" (MHM), organized by the School of Journalism and Communication at Peking University, was successfully held.

Amidst the lush midsummer, the academic community of health communication is rapidly developing. Scholars and experts from over 60 universities and research institutions, including Peking University, Tsinghua University, Nanyang Technological University (Singapore), George Mason University (USA), Royal Roads University (Canada), and City University of Hong Kong, gathered to discuss the evolving landscape of health communication.

Since its inception in 2018, the MHM conference has been held annually. Coinciding with rapid advancements in artificial intelligence (AI), the conference has witnessed the interactions between health communication and media technology. The theme this year was "Reconstructing Health Communication in the Digital Intelligence Era," focusing on paradigm shifts and ethical challenges in health communication brought by technological advancements.

The opening ceremony was chaired by Professor XU Jing, director of Health Communication Program at the School of Journalism and Communication, Peking University. Speeches were delivered by REN Yuzhong, Vice President of Peking University; May O. Lwin, Associate Provost of Nanyang Technological University; and CHEN Gang, Dean of the School of Journalism and Communication, Peking University.

REN Yuzhong welcomed and thanked the attending scholars, highlighting the innovative integration of the doctoral forum in this year's symposium, aimed at nurturing young scholars, strengthening academic exchanges, and promoting the practical application of their knowledge to serve society. He emphasized adhering to the spirit of humanity of the MHM conference, maintaining humanistic care amid technological developments. Professor May O. Lwin expressed hopes for deepening academic exchanges, noting the fruitful collaborations between Nanyang Technological University's Wee Kim Wee School of Communication and Information and Peking University's School of Journalism and Communication in recent years. She proposed establishing an Asian health communication research network anchored by the two universities to collaboratively address contemporary health challenges. Dean CHEN Gang reviewed the establishment and growth of health communication studies at Peking University. He expressed hope that Peking University would continue to play a pioneering role, using the annual MHM conference as a platform to enhance international exchanges and cooperation, thereby consolidating global knowledge to advance the field of health communication.

The keynote speeches featured prominent scholars sharing cutting-edge insights in health communication:

- Professor May O. Lwin introduced the development journey of Nanyang Technological University's Asian Center for Behavior Insights & Interventions (HABITS), emphasizing cross-cultural and interdisciplinary collaboration to bridge academic research and health practice.

- QI Xiaopeng, Director of the Global Public Health Center at the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention, presented on "Global Public Health System Development and Future Prospects," sharing experiences and perspectives on building global public health systems.
- Professor ZHAO Xiaoquan from George Mason University discussed "AI Applications in Campaign Formative Research," exploring the potential and challenges of AI in health communication.
- Professor WANG Mingxu from Xi'an Jiaotong University's School of Public Health addressed "Privacy Protection and Ethical Standards for Open Psychological and Behavioral Research Data," advocating for safeguarding data security and participant rights.
- Associate Professor JIANG Crystal Li from City University of Hong Kong discussed "Cross-cultural differences in AI chatbot uses for mental health support: A five-region comparison," highlighting the impact of cultural contexts on the effectiveness of AI applications.
- Associate Professor MENG Jingbo from Ohio State University presented "Integrating Health and Computational Communication in a New Era of Digital Technologies," proposing a comprehensive research framework for merging these two fields.

The subsequent roundtable discussion among young leading scholars, chaired by Professor LI Zhenyi from Royal Roads University, included professors RUI Jian (South China University of Technology), JIANG Shaohai (National University of Singapore), CHEN Liang (Tsinghua University), CHEN Hongliang (Zhejiang University), LI Yungeng (Shanghai Jiao Tong University), and HE Qijun (Shanghai University). Notably, these scholars would deeply engage in subsequent sessions by moderating doctoral forum at their respective universities.

During intermissions, technical applications involving Digital Agent and Generative AI were showcased. The MHM conference included thematic panel discussions addressing: "Adoption, Processing, and Persuasion Mechanisms of Health Information in Digital Media," "Sociotechnical Inequality, Cultural Metaphors, and the Plight of Marginalized Groups in Health Communication," "Tobacco Control Research from the Perspective of Health Communication in the Digital Intelligence Era," and "Digital Intelligence Empowerment and Group Differentiation: Information Behavior and Intervention Pathways in Health Communication." The Best Paper Awards were presented to XUE Haoning (University of Utah), ZHANG Ying (University of Pennsylvania), XIN Na (Peking University), and YUAN Maowen (Zhejiang University) for their outstanding researches.

Following the opening ceremony, additional activities such as summer course lectures, poster presentations, workshop, university colloquiums, and high-table dialogues, fostered extensive academic exchanges. These comprehensive interactions, like the vibrancy of midsummer, continue to drive the development of a more compassionate, resilient, and intelligent global health communication ecosystem.

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