# Editor’s Note

## Health Communication in the Digital Age: Perspectives from Theory to Practice

The *Journal of Medicine, Humanity and Media* begins 2025 with a rich collection of research that continues to explore critical themes from the 7th International Conference on “Medicine, Humanity and Media” (MHM2024). While our previous issue focused on health communication for enhanced resilience, this issue presents diverse perspectives and empirical studies that illuminate contemporary health communication challenges, particularly in our increasingly digital and complex healthcare environment.

A significant highlight of MHM2024 was Dr. Crystal Jiang’s (Associate Professor at City University of Hong Kong) insightful lecture on “Health Communication: Theoretical Perspectives and Meta-theories,” which provided valuable frameworks for understanding the theoretical landscape of health communication. Her discussion emphasized the fundamentally interdisciplinary nature of health communication, drawing from various disciplines including psychology, medicine, informatics, and marketing. This theoretical diversity, while enriching our field, also creates unique challenges in understanding and applying appropriate frameworks to research and practice.

Dr. Crystal Jiang’s analysis centered on two prominent meta-theoretical frameworks that help organize our understanding of health communication research. The first framework, James Carey’s transmission and ritualistic perspectives, offers fundamental insights into how health communication operates. The transmission view, focusing on the sender-message-receiver model, is particularly evident in several articles in this issue, such as the studies on health chatbots and vaccine communication strategies. These studies demonstrate how health information is transmitted and received in various contexts.

The second framework discussed by Dr. Crystal Jiang, Robert Craig’s seven traditions of communication theory, provides a comprehensive structure for understanding different theoretical approaches in health communication. These traditions - rhetorical, semiotic, phenomenological, cybernetic, sociopsychological, sociocultural, and critical - are well represented across the articles in this issue. For instance, the study on anthropomorphic health chatbots exemplifies the cybernetic tradition, while research on public health emergency rumor refutation demonstrates the sociopsychological approach. The analysis of women’s health science communication videos reflects both semiotic and critical traditions, showcasing how these theoretical perspectives can be productively combined.

The articles in this issue cluster around several key themes that demonstrate the practical application of these theoretical frameworks. In the area of public health cognition and technology, Zhang et al.’s research on health chatbots and Lyu’s study on technological integration in cognitive upgrading showcase how theoretical understanding can inform technological innovation in healthcare communication. The section on health communication strategies for at-risk populations, including Li et al.’s work on rumor refutation and Zhou et al.’s analysis of COVID-19 vaccine narratives, demonstrates both the transmission aspects of health communication and the crucial role of cultural meaning-making in public health campaigns.

This issue also features important contributions to our understanding of specific health communication contexts. The research on tobacco donations in China provides critical insights into the complex relationship between public health messaging and commercial interests. The studies on women’s health communication and rural health practices reflect the importance of considering cultural and social contexts in health communication strategies. These papers demonstrate how theoretical frameworks can guide our understanding of specific health communication challenges while suggesting practical interventions.

As we look to the future of health communication research, several important considerations emerge from the work presented in this issue. First, the increasing role of technology in health communication, from AI-powered chatbots to social media platforms, requires theoretical frameworks that can accommodate these new channels while maintaining focus on fundamental communication processes. Second, the growing importance of cultural competence in health communication necessitates approaches that can bridge different health belief systems and communication practices. Third, the complexity of contemporary health challenges demands theoretical frameworks that can support interdisciplinary collaboration while maintaining methodological rigor.

This diverse collection reflects the increasingly interdisciplinary nature of health communication research and its crucial role in addressing contemporary health challenges. From theoretical perspectives to practical applications, from traditional media to emerging technologies, these papers demonstrate the evolving landscape of our field. The meta-theoretical frameworks discussed in this issue provide valuable tools for organizing and understanding this complex landscape, while the empirical studies show how these frameworks can be applied to address real-world health communication challenges.

We invite readers to engage deeply with both the conceptual frameworks and empirical findings presented in this issue. As we continue to navigate the complexities of health communication in an increasingly digital world, such research provides valuable insights for scholars, practitioners, and policymakers alike. The theoretical perspectives and practical applications presented here offer important tools for advancing our understanding of health communication while improving its effectiveness in promoting public health.

# **编者按**

## **数字时代的健康传播：从理论到实践的视角**

《医学、人本与媒介》学刊2025年第一期汇集了一系列重要研究，继续探索第七届“医学、人文与媒体”国际学术研讨会（MHM2024）的核心主题。在上一期关注“以增强韧性为目标的健康传播”的基础上，本期呈现了多元视角和实证研究，尤其聚焦于我们日益数字化和复杂的医疗环境中的当代健康传播挑战。

MHM2024的一大亮点是香港城市大学副教授蒋莉博士题为《健康传播：理论视角与元理论》的专题讲座，为理解本领域的理论提供了重要框架。她的讨论强调了健康传播的跨学科本质，涉及心理学、医学、信息学和营销学等多个领域。这种理论多样性虽然丰富了我们的领域，但也在理解和应用适当的研究框架方面带来了独特的挑战。

蒋莉博士的分析聚焦于两个有助于组织我们对健康传播研究理解的重要元理论框架。第一个框架是James Carey的传递与仪式视角，为理解健康传播的运作方式提供了基本洞见。传递视角关注传播者-信息-接收者模式，在本期多篇文章中得到体现，如关于健康聊天机器人和疫苗传播策略的研究，展示了健康信息在不同情境中如何传递和接收。

第二个框架是Robert Craig提出的传播理论七大传统，为理解健康传播中的不同理论方法提供了全面架构。这些传统—修辞学、符号学、现象学、控制论、社会心理学、社会文化和批判学—在本期文章中得到了充分展现。例如，关于拟人化健康聊天机器人的研究体现了控制论传统，而公共卫生紧急情况下的谣言澄清研究则展示了社会心理学方法。女性健康科普短视频的分析则反映了符号学和批判学传统的结合应用。

本期文章围绕几个关键主题展开，展示了这些理论框架的实践应用。在公众健康认知与技术领域，张等人关于健康聊天机器人的研究和吕的认知增强技术整合研究，展示了理论理解如何指导医疗传播中的技术创新。在针对风险人群的健康传播策略方面，李等人关于谣言澄清的工作和周等人对新冠疫苗叙事的分析，既展示了健康传播的传递层面，也体现了公共卫生运动中文化意义建构的关键作用。

本期还收录了一些关于特定健康传播情境的重要贡献。关于中国烟草捐赠的研究为理解公共卫生信息传播与商业利益之间的复杂关系提供了重要见解。关于女性健康传播和乡村健康实践的研究反映了在健康传播策略中考虑文化和社会情境的重要性。这些文章展示了理论框架如何指导我们理解具体的健康传播挑战，同时提出实践干预建议。

展望健康传播研究的未来，本期文章呈现的工作引发了几点重要思考。首先，从人工智能驱动的聊天机器人到社交媒体平台，技术在健康传播中的角色日益重要，这需要能够适应这些新渠道同时保持对基本传播过程关注的理论框架。其次，健康传播中文化能力的重要性日益突出，需要能够连接不同健康信念系统和传播实践的方法。第三，当代健康挑战的复杂性要求理论框架能够支持跨学科合作，同时保持方法论的严谨性。

这些多样化的研究反映了健康传播研究日益增强的跨学科性质，以及其在应对当代健康挑战中的关键作用。从理论视角到实践应用，从传统媒体到新兴技术，这些论文展现了本领域的演进图景。本期讨论的元理论框架为组织和理解这一复杂景观提供了有价值的工具，而实证研究则展示了这些框架如何应用于解决现实世界的健康传播挑战。

我们诚邀读者深入探讨本期呈现的概念框架和研究发现。在日益数字化的世界中探索健康传播的复杂性时，这些研究为学者、实践者和政策制定者提供了宝贵的参考。这里呈现的理论视角和实践应用为推进我们对健康传播的理解并提高其在促进公共健康方面的效能提供了重要工具。