

The 9th "Medicine, Humanity and Media" Health Communication International Conference and PhD Symposium Successfully Held

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On July 18, 2026, the 9th "Medicine, Humanity and Media" Health Communication International Conference and PhD Symposium was successfully hosted by the School of Journalism and Communication, Peking University. The conference was supported by the 2026 "Graduate Education Innovation Program" of Peking University.

In the midsummer of Yanyuan, distinguished guests gathered from home and abroad. Invited guests from the University of California, Santa Barbara (USA), Royal Roads University (Canada), University of Vienna (Austria), National University of Singapore, City University of Hong Kong, as well as the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention, South China University of Technology, Zhejiang University, Shanghai Jiao Tong University, Shanghai University, Wuhan University, Xi'an Jiaotong University, Fujian Polytechnic Normal University, Tianjin University of Traditional Chinese Medicine, Chengdu University of Traditional Chinese Medicine, and Fudan University Shanghai Medical College, joined nearly 100 young scholars, doctoral students and master's students from universities, research institutions, CDC centers and related hospitals worldwide. Centering on the theme International Experiences and Local Pathways in Constructing the Knowledge System of Health Communication, they carried out international and interdisciplinary exchanges through keynote speeches, paper presentations, thematic workshops and high-level forums, to jointly build a new ecosystem for health communication research.

The opening ceremony was presided over by Xu Jing, Professor at the School of Journalism and Communication, Peking University and Director of the Health Communication Program. Chu Xiaobo, Member of the Standing Committee of the CPC Committee and Vice President of

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Peking University, and Chen Kaihe, Vice Dean of the School of Journalism and Communication, Peking University, delivered speeches successively.

In his address, Chu Xiaobo noted that health communication serves as a bridge linking medical science and the public, undertaking the vital mission of supporting the "Healthy China" strategy in the new era. He reviewed the profound legacy of Peking University's School of Journalism and Communication in journalism education, which has remained at the forefront of disciplinary development for over a century. To meet the demands of disciplinary progress and international dialogue, the School has continuously developed the "Medicine, Humanity and Media" (MHM) International Symposium platform. After eight years of dedicated efforts, the initiative has borne rich fruit. This year's conference, co-organized with the International Doctoral Forum on Health Communication, not only carries forward the tradition of academic exchange, but also actively fosters young academic talents and doctoral cohorts. He encouraged participating scholars to learn from each other, inspire new insights, and jointly advance the thriving development of health communication.

In his remarks, Chen Kaihe stated that after a decade of in-depth development, health communication at Peking University has delivered fruitful outcomes in talent cultivation, theoretical innovation and social service. As a flagship academic event of the School, the "Medicine, Humanity and Media" International Symposium has become a key platform for Sino-foreign dialogue on health communication. The theme of this conference closely addresses core disciplinary issues, with both theoretical value and practical significance. He expressed the hope that scholars at home and abroad would engage in thorough exchanges and accumulate valuable academic achievements for building China's health communication knowledge system.

Right after the opening ceremony, the keynote speech session began. The first speaker was Shaunak Sastry, Professor at the University of California, Santa Barbara and First Vice President of the National Communication Association (NCA). His speech, titled *Humans as the Closed Loop: Cultural Insights, Structural Critique and the Future of Critical Health Communication*, was grounded in the critical health communication framework and put forward three core propositions: health communication should be emancipatory rather than managerial; research needs to integrate structural factors across macro, meso and micro levels; and disciplinary studies should be rooted in local life experiences, stay alert to power imbalances caused by AI technology, and advocate examining intelligent communication beyond techno-centrism.

The second speaker was Jörg Matthes, Chair Professor at the University of Vienna, ICA Fellow of the International Communication Association, and Editor-in-Chief of the leading international journal *Communication Theory*. His speech, titled *Advancing Health Communication Theory in the Age of Artificial Intelligence*, outlined three mainstream research directions of health communication in the current AI landscape: treating AI as a communication agent, as an auxiliary tool for medical decision-making, and as a macro social system. Meanwhile, Professor Matthes proposed pathways for theoretical innovation, calling for abandoning outdated concepts and variables to explore new theoretical mechanisms of AI-enabled health communication.

The third speaker was Dr. Lance Rodewald, Senior Advisor to the Immunization Program of the Chinese CDC and recipient of the Chinese Government Friendship Award. His speech, titled *Vaccine Confidence: Challenges and Opportunities*, reviewed the remarkable achievements of China's immunization program over the past 50 years, pointed out that vaccine hesitancy is a normal psychological response among the public, systematically explained the "3C Theory", and

proposed multi-stakeholder collaboration to build a national vaccine trust system and integrate immunization into basic public social services.

Subsequently, Jiang Li, Associate Professor at the Department of Media and Communication, City University of Hong Kong, Jiang Shaohai, Associate Professor at the Department of Communications and New Media, National University of Singapore, and Rui Jian, Professor at the School of Journalism and Communication, South China University of Technology, also delivered keynote speeches. Their topics were Supported or Indulged? Reconstruction of Social Support Mechanisms in the AI Era and Its Implications for Health Communication, Bridging the Gap or Widening the Divide? — Digital Health and Health Inequity Among Older Adults, and Intelligent Health Communication Models from the Perspective of Technological Change respectively.

In the following roundtable for leading young scholars, nine young researchers from Peking University, Toronto Metropolitan University (Canada), Zhejiang University, Wuhan University, Shanghai Jiao Tong University, Xi'an Jiaotong University, Shanghai University, Tianjin University of Traditional Chinese Medicine and Fujian Polytechnic Normal University introduced their research focuses, and exchanged views with doctoral and master's students on academic development and mentorship. The conference adopted and innovated the Mentor-Mentee Program commonly seen in international academic events such as ICA and IAMCR, to support young students' academic growth, paper publication and research translation in diverse forms.

The main conference spanned two days, featuring 12 sub-forums and 72 paper presentations. Special sessions included the "Stroke Health Promotion Workshop", the "Research Publication Workshop", and the forum on International Communication of Traditional Chinese Medicine Culture from the Perspective of Global Health Governance co-hosted with Chengdu University of Traditional Chinese Medicine. Following the main conference, there were also a high-level forum co-organized with the Wuhan Institute of Artificial Intelligence, Peking University — The Future is Here: AI-Driven Regional Health Governance, the "2026 Aging Communication Forum" co-hosted with the Aging Communication Branch of the Chinese Gerontology and Geriatrics Society, and a five-day Peking University summer school course Health Communication Research: Theories and Methods.

The 9th "Medicine, Humanity and Media" Health Communication International Conference and PhD Symposium examines local realities through international dialogue and consolidates disciplinary foundations through youth cultivation. It will inject lasting academic momentum into building a health communication knowledge system with both local characteristics and global vision, and contribute academic strength to the implementation of the "Healthy China" strategy.