



Office of Public Affairs

Factors in Decisions on Communication about FDA Actions

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Today's Discussion

- Organizational overview
- FDA's communication goals
- Key issues
- Criteria for issuing press
- Communications challenges
- New approaches



Office of Public Affairs Statistics

- # of press officers: 10
- Media inquiries: 50-100/day
- Press releases: Up to 25/month
- Media briefings: 5-10/month
- Stand up press conferences: 5-10/year
- Public meetings: 20-30/year
- Congressional hearings: > 50 in 2007/2008



FDA Communication Goals

- Give consumers timely, understandable, useful, actionable information
- Foster public trust and confidence



Key Issues

- Product safety and surveillance
 - Food safety
 - Medical product safety
- Regulatory action
- Agency initiatives



Criteria for Issuing Press Paper

- Has the agency taken an action?
- Do we have enough data or information?
- Do we understand the issue well enough to explain it?
- Do we have a clear message to the public?
- Can we assure the public that we are finding solutions?



Communication Challenges

- Variety of audiences and expectations
- Issues are scientific and regulatory
- Legal limits on disclosure (Commercial Confidential Information, open investigation)
- Data not easily accessible
- Issues may be value-laden or emotional



Other Challenges

The public's understanding & acceptance of:

- Scientific uncertainty
- Benefit/risk assessments
- Limitations with adverse event reporting



More Challenges

- Consistency
- Crisis communications
- Reaching other audiences
- Evaluating the effectiveness of our communication program



Some New Approaches

- Revamped Web site
- Risk Communication Advisory Committee
- Greater access to Subject Matter Experts (more interviews, editorial boards, tours of FDA science labs)
- Putting things into context
- Reaching out to science writers



Summary

- Communications is a responsibility and top priority for FDA
- High-level support in the agency
- A real will and desire to keep the public informed
- We welcome your advice and guidance