

The Committee applauds the Strategic Plan for Risk Communication at the Food and Drug Administration, as a major step forward in enabling FDA to meet its mission of service to the American public. The Committee recommends continuing these efforts to make scientifically sound communication central to the production, summary, and dissemination of evidence regarding FDA's regulated products. An important part of that strategic planning is identifying the outcomes that communications are intended to achieve. An outcomes-focused planning process can further define the key priorities for improving capacity, policy, and science.

The Committee applauds FDA's commitment to creating the in-house scientific work force necessary to execute its strategic communication plan. The Committee recommends that FDA develop an organizational structure that ensures that individuals with the needed expertise are recruited, retained, and effectively integrated with its operations.

The Committee applauds FDA's efforts to create partnerships with other public and private organizations that produce and use studies relevant to the effectiveness of its communications. The Committee recommends expansion of these efforts to achieve full leverage of FDA's expertise and resources. The Committee offers itself as a resource for developing those plans.

The Committee applauds FDA's commitment to producing and evaluating its communications to a scientific standard. The Committee recommends that, as part of its continuing efforts, FDA develop a work-flow system for ensuring that communication needs are integrated into its operations. That system will ensure that its subject-matter experts and communication scientists work together to create, summarize, refine, and deliver needed information, in time to allow proper evaluation.

The Committee recommends that FDA use the Strategic Communication initiative to reaffirm its commitment to help the public make informed choices regarding FDA-regulated products. Promoting awareness of the initiative will ensure that full benefit is derived from these efforts.

The Committee recognizes that current interpretations of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1990 hamper FDA's ability to evaluate its communications, to a scientific standard, in a timely fashion, and with adequately diverse samples. The Committee makes two recommendations to address this problem. First, FDA should identify the public welfare implications of *not* testing its communications. Second, FDA should submit a proposal to the Office of Management and Budget, for a communication evaluation protocol that balances the public welfare needs of FDA's mandate with those of the Paperwork Reduction Act.