



PCP Breaking News

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PCP Press Statement - Mishandling of health information can be harmful and should be challenged by real experts

The Philippine College of Physicians is extremely concerned at the manner by which scientific and medical information are being disseminated to the general public. These medical information are more often being released despite lack of strong, evidence-based scientific facts and seek more to sensationalize and sow anxiety, fear and panic rather than to inform.

Sensationalism, distortion or the spread of half-truths, for example in social media, among other forms, often has devastating consequences on patients, their families and the medical community. It deprives patients and others the access to accurate health information necessary for them to make informed decisions.

Scientific and medical information should be communicated with care, prudence and circumspection to prevent doing harm to the public. It is the doctor's ethical duty to communicate and enlighten the people with the knowledge and information he/she has, address their concerns and save lives. While many scientific or medical terms used by health professionals are not readily understood, it is the obligation of the health professional to explain these to patient and public for clarity.

Judgment and definitive conclusions should not be made when there is insufficient evidence, nor should it be based from partial results of a clinical study or observations. Pronouncements of medical conclusions should be exercised responsibly, and with care and accountability. They should not create doubt nor confusion to the patient and public.



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Expertise on a particular scientific field is earned from years of intense study, qualifications and experience. Expertise is peer bestowed, and not self-proclaimed. An expert knows when to become a credible source of public and medical information or when to defer to another health professional for validation and confirmation. They may disagree with the conclusion and hence, peer review as a process is sought to adjudicate for well considered interventions. This is the nature of the medical profession with its evolving processes. The key is communication, and careful and proper dissemination of the benefit-risk information to patients, the media and the general public. Real experts are encouraged to speak up and correct misinformation.

When faced with doubt about health information, the PCP urges patients to consult with their trusted medical professional for a medical opinion. The opinion of a healthcare practitioner is often based on the most current medical facts available. It is important though to inquire whether this statement is an accepted standard of practice or more personal view that comes from experience.

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