The Woodhull Study Revisited: Nurses’ Representation in Health News Media

WOMEN UNDERREPRESENTED AS EXPERT SOURCES IN NEWS STORIES

- Representation in newsrooms: 24% women
- Expert sources in news stories: 36% women
- Representation in news images: 25% women

NURSES ARE LARGEST GROUP OF HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

- 3 nurses to 1 doctor
- ~3.5 million RNs in U.S.*
- ~800,000 physicians in U.S.*
- 90% of nurses are female

MORE OF THE SAME OVER TIME: REPLICATION OF ORIGINAL WOODHULL STUDY 1997 VS. 2017

The Woodhull Study on Nursing and the Media found that nurses were identified as sources in only 4 percent of quotations or other sourcing in health news stories in leading print newspapers, and has not improved in 20 years.iii

NURSES AS SOURCES IN HEALTH NEWS:* 1997: 4% 2017: 2%

* Difference is not statistically significant.
KINDS OF STORIES NURSES ARE MENTIONED IN

Nurses were most likely to be mentioned in articles about labor (57%), the profession (44%), quality (32%), and education (25%). They were less likely to be mentioned in articles about research (9%) and policy (4%).

BARRIERS TO THE USE OF DIVERSE SOURCES IN HEALTH REPORTING

Barriers keeping journalists from nurses

- Journalists don’t fully understand the range of nurses’ roles, work and education.
- Journalists often don’t know how to find nurses to interview and have limited time to track them down.
- Editorial biases, policies and processes can get in the way of using nurses as sources.

Barriers keeping nurses from journalists

- Communications staff of health care organizations and universities aren’t offering nurses as sources unless journalists ask for them.
- Nurses and their associations aren’t strategic about engaging journalists.

MOST RECENT TWEETS FROM THE PUBLIC TWITTER ACCOUNTS OF 47 OF THE TOP SCHOOLS OF NURSING

- 80% Inward facing hashtags
- 35% #NURSING-SPECIFIC
- 37% #SCHOOL-SPECIFIC
- 8% #CONFERENCE OR TWITTER CHAT
- 20% Outward facing hashtags
- 1% of followers are media accounts