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## **GUEST EDITOR'S NOTE: "SUSTAINABILITY AND EQUALITY OF HEALTH: EMPOWERED THROUGH COMMUNICATION"**

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The special issue on Health Communication themed "Sustainability and Equality of Health: Empowered through Communication" highlights several critical aspects of health communication and the role of media in promoting positive health beliefs for sustainable and equitable health outcomes. This issue features six papers that emphasize the importance of effective communication in different contexts and audiences. The insights provided by these studies are vital to building an understanding of media and communication practices that help build resilience among members of the public. In the post-pandemic era, this resilience is seen to be the public's strongest defence.

Kreps posits that the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic has further illuminated the necessity for clear and accurate public health communication. The global crisis highlighted significant challenges in disseminating relevant information, abating uncertainty, and combating misinformation. Effective communication strategies are essential for promoting health sustainability and equality, ensuring that accurate, timely information guides public responses and reduces health disparities.

Health significantly affects behaviour and overall well-being. In the article by Ahlam Abdul Aziz et al., Malaysian university students were found to exhibit positive associations between health problems, self-efficacy, and behavioural change. This underscores the need for education and awareness to prevent health issues and promote self-efficacy among youths. Here, effective communication strategies can play a pivotal role in disseminating this knowledge and fostering a supportive environment for young people.

Media portrayals of health issues also significantly impact public perceptions. For instance, Roslan et al. analyze the Malay telefilm "Hingga Jumpa Lagi" (2018). The authors found that the film had oversimplified the complexities of cancer, risking misconceptions and stigmatization. Accurate and comprehensive media portrayals of health issues are necessary to foster informed support for patients and enhance societal awareness. This points to the need for responsible media communication in promoting health literacy and equity.

Meanwhile, Zulkefli et al. found that the Korean drama "It's Okay to Not Be Okay" (IOTNBO) positively influences viewers' perceptions and behaviors towards health by

addressing health issues and portraying individuals' struggles. Malaysian audiences revealed that the drama promotes greater tolerance and understanding toward mental health, underscoring the importance of media as an educational tool in promoting health awareness and reducing stigma.

The study on Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), exemplifies another area where media communication plays a critical role in the dissemination of health information. The ADHD community often faces discrimination and stereotyping due to mixed and unprofessional media content. Experts like Ned Hallowell use social media to promote positive ADHD traits, reframing the narrative to emphasize strengths and reduce stigma. This demonstrates the power of communication in transforming public perceptions and promoting health equality.

Although social media is seen to be an engaging tool for the diffusion of health information, overuse among its audiences has its disadvantages. A study among university students in China discovered positive relationships between excessive social media use and social media fatigue (SMF) and fear of missing out (FOMO). Influenced by the standards portrayed on social media, the expectations that students put on themselves cause strain on their mental wellbeing. These particular issues highlight the importance of encouraging students to engage with their broader communities to alleviate pressures and maintain a healthy study-life balance. Effective communication within these communities can provide the support and resources students need to manage stress and avoid burnout.

In conclusion, this special issue on Health Communication emphasises that addressing health requires a multifaceted approach, encompassing education, effective communication, accurate media representation, and community engagement. By fostering self-efficacy, reducing stigma, and promoting health awareness, we can better support the well-being of society. Effective communication is key to achieving sustainable and equitable health outcomes, empowering individuals, and communities to achieve better health.

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