

How to manage a vaccine safety crisis in your country: what to do, what to avoid?

■ Objectives

- Discuss communication response to vaccine safety crisis at country level
- Checklist on crisis management
- Share tips on dealing with media
- Major sources of information

■ Process

- Role play - press conference
- Group work - response to vaccine safety crisis
- Sharing experiences and resource materials



Key issues: media relations

- Media important partner
- Think of communications and media relations as part of preparation of any immunization activity
- Campaigns and safety crisis need quick reaction capability
- Need for preparation
 - Look for facts
 - Prepare key messages
 - Understand the media interest
 - Prepare for difficult questions
 - Identify spokespersons
- Need for skill building for managers (previous stressful experiences)
- Cultivate continuous relation with media

Media has a different angle. They are looking for:

- High profile events
- Drama with personal aspects
- Controversy or conflict
- Disaster, malpractice and negligence
- Unexpected outcomes
- Polarity of views

The media like:

- A fast response
- Accuracy and simplicity
- Statistics with explanation
- Context (part of a wider picture)
- Comments or explanation from the highest authority possible
- Both—sides of the story

When dealing with media you have to be:

- PRO - ACTIVE
- POSITIVE
- PREPARED
- RESPONSIBLE
- RESPONSIVE
- REASONABLE
- CONFIDENT
- COMPASSIONATE
- COMFORTABLE

Key issues: dealing with crisis

- Be prepared-importance of planning
- Avoid crisis always better than dealing with a crisis
- Importance of having a functioning and effective AEFI monitoring system
- Quick and thorough investigation needed to determine if coincidental, programmatic error or real vaccine safety issue
- Importance of having documented vaccine quality
- Inform medical professionals of issues
- Same message – identify spokesperson
- Think twice before blaming vaccine or stopping immunization
- You are not alone:
 - Involve professional organizations – credible prominent persons
 - other countries/UNICEF/WHO

Resources



- List of resources (documents, web site)
- Aide-mémoire on investigations
- Check list for ensuring safety and efficiency of mass campaigns
- Training (Global Training Network on AEFI monitoring)
- UNICEF Media Guide for health workers