



# News Release

## ***Evaluation of risk communication practices required to ensure health and safety of Canadians, Expert Panel finds***

**Ottawa (June 9, 2015)** – Released today by the Council of Canadian Academies, a new expert panel report, ***Health Product Risk Communication: Is the Message Getting Through?***, examines how to evaluate the effectiveness of tools used to communicate information about health products and their side effects, such as package inserts, public advisories, or recall notices. Overall, the Panel found the effectiveness of these tools is rarely systematically evaluated in Canada or other jurisdictions.

Effective risk communication is an important instrument for improving public health. It can protect Canadians from preventable hazards such as medication side effects or errors, product defects, and uncertainties surrounding particular drugs. However, evaluation of the tools used to communicate these health product messages is essential to determine if they are effective. Without such evaluation, it is very difficult to know what types of communication tools work best, for whom, under what circumstances, and why.

“Regulators use several tools to communicate the risks of health products, but we know little about whether their messages are reaching and influencing the views and behaviours of various populations,” said Annette M. Cormier O’Connor, FRSC, FCAHS, Chair of the Expert Panel. “Without evaluative information on who is paying attention, what they are learning, and what impacts are occurring, mistakes may be repeated and opportunities to demonstrate success may be lost. However, with dedicated commitment and resources, there is an opportunity for Canada to build on current efforts and take international leadership in this field.”

The Expert Panel’s report documents effective risk communication practices and risk communication tools used by regulators in Canada and around the world. It also overviews evaluation methods for these tools and offers practical guidance for regulators and practitioners to create meaningful evaluations.

Other key findings discussed within the Panel’s report include:

- Recognition of the importance of dialogue and ongoing relationships is prompting a paradigm shift for risk communication.
- Regulators around the world use similar health product risk communication tools that are not systematically evaluated.
- Evaluation is an integral part of risk communication and can be supported with institutional commitment and sufficient resources.
- Careful planning determines relevant evaluation questions, which guide evaluation methods.

For more information or to download a copy of the Panel's report, visit the Council of Canadian Academies' website, [www.scienceadvice.ca](http://www.scienceadvice.ca).

**About the Council of Canadian Academies**

The Council of Canadian Academies is an independent, not-for-profit organization that began operation in 2005. The Council undertakes independent, authoritative, science-based, expert assessments that inform public policy development in Canada. Assessments are conducted by independent, multidisciplinary panels (groups) of experts from across Canada and abroad. Panel members serve free of charge and many are Fellows of the Council's Member Academies. The Council's vision is to be a trusted voice for science in the public interest. For more information about the Council or its assessments, please visit [www.scienceadvice.ca](http://www.scienceadvice.ca).

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