

# Swiss media likely to twist positive health messages

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Analysis of a series of public health campaigns in the Swiss media has shown that, although the campaign was entirely focussed on positive messages, the resulting stories often featured 'negative' threats and warnings. The study, published in the open access journal *BMC Research Notes*, also found that the campaign was much more successful in the German media, compared to French or Italian.

Bettina Borisch worked with a team of researchers from the University of Geneva to carry out the study into the reporting of two [colon cancer](#) campaigns. She said, "Health messages can be framed either in terms of potential gains or potential losses. The campaigns issued only positive, gain-framed messages, which are known to lead to a greater behaviour shift than loss-framed ones.

It is interesting to note that in the articles which resulted, there was an approximately even split between negative and positive framing (including mixed framing). However, since preferences in the mixed frame condition were virtually identical to the positive frame, we suggest that the messages could still be perceived by the reader as a motivation to change behavior"

Regional newspapers reported significantly more about the campaign and produced the most detailed articles. According to Borisch, "Health campaigns are an important means of health communication and often focus on the [media](#). The regional press is an important but sometimes underestimated vehicle of [health information](#)".

**More information:** Media response to colon cancer campaigns in Switzerland 2005-2007: regional newspapers are the most reliable among the printed media. Carine F. Wang-Buholzer, Marta Lomazzi and Bettina Borisch, BMC Research Notes (in press), [www.biomedcentral.com/bmcresnotes/](http://www.biomedcentral.com/bmcresnotes/)

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