

Crisis Communications: Plan Ahead, Respond Quickly, and Protect Your Reputation

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Crisis Communications: Strategies To Plan Ahead, Respond Quickly and Protect Your Reputation

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MPL Association
Medical Liability Conference
May 20, 2021

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Situation Analysis

- Favorability towards medical profession at high level
 - **77%** rate doctors highly for honesty and ethics (Gallup 2020)
 - **74%** hold mostly positive views of doctors (Pew Research 2020)
 - **88%** of people rate their doctors "excellent or good"; hospitals by **72%** (Gallup 2010)
- Yet significant vulnerabilities exist
 - **41%** of Americans involved personally in a medical error or second hand (Institute for Healthcare Improvement/National Patient Safety Foundation 2017 study)
 - **25%** drop between 1997 and 2017 – "Provider made correct diagnosis"
 - Patients say only **12%** of the time do doctors admit mistakes all or most of the time (Pew Research 2020)
 - **94%** of patients use online reviews to pick providers (Software Advice – 2020 survey)
 - **43%** would go to out-of-network MD with similar qualifications to in-network provider but with better reviews

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Situation Analysis (cont.)

- Explosion in number of sites where patients can file complaints

 Angie's list



 CareDash

 facebook


Google My Business

 healthgrades

 RateMDs

 vitals

 WebMD

 yelp

 Zocdoc

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Plan Ahead – Best Practices

- Identify where you might be vulnerable – and address it
 - Operations
 - Employees (DEI, Labor)
 - Safety
 - Finance
 - Technology
 - Communications
- Consider perception research
 - Assume favorability and goodwill, but check for gaps
- Gather key data on operations, finances, employment, training, safety, etc.
 - Update periodically



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Plan Ahead – Best Practices (cont.)

- Develop a crisis plan
(with likeliest scenarios, template materials, contact lists)
- Identify, orient and test crisis team via drill – refine materials based on drill
- Conduct communications/media training for institution's leader, spokesperson and back-ups
- Ensure website contains key information you would want known in a crisis
 - Accolades/achievements
 - Outcomes
 - Commitment to patient satisfaction

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Plan Ahead – Best Practices (cont.)

- Establish/refine personal and institution's presence on social media
- Monitor, moderate and respond to comments on social media; monitor traditional media for self and key competitors
- Identify and secure key advisors to help guide crisis response – legal, risk, communications



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Plan Ahead – Best Practices (cont.)

- Identify and cultivate third-party allies (prominent citizens/donors, satisfied patients, elected officials, industry experts, academics)
- Identify and monitor public communications from likely critics (former employees, patient safety advocates, labor unions, plaintiffs' attorneys, regulators, elected officials)



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Respond Quickly

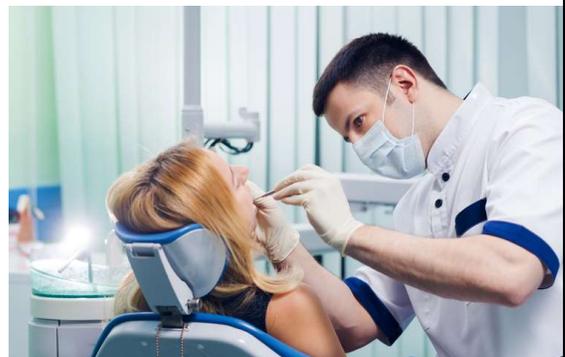
- Avoid “paralysis by analysis” – speed is paramount
 - Update/activate template materials
 - Deploy crisis team
- Use intelligence gathered via monitoring to guide response
- Avoid overreacting or underreacting
 - Professional advice/guidance highly recommended
- Use data to enhance credibility of messaging
- Become the preferred, credible source of information
 - Don't be hamstrung by legal concerns or let critics/others set communications tempo



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Respond Quickly (cont.)

- Remember HIPAA and other obligations
- Remember empathy, but avoid taking responsibility and take care when apologizing
- Stick to the “high road” – even if critics are acting in bad faith
- Communicate internally first
- Use different communications channels to reach each key audience



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After Its Over

- Review actions and responses
 - Where did we do well?
 - Where could we improve next time?
- Thank employees and allies
- Replenish “bank of goodwill” via philanthropy, engagement



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Crisis Communications
May 20, 2021

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Chief Financial Officer/Senior Vice President

OMS National Insurance Company, RRG
*Provides professional liability insurance for Oral
Maxillofacial Surgeons*

Fortress Insurance Company (wholly owned subsidiary)
*Provides professional liability insurance to the
general dental and dental specialty fields*

Crisis Scenario – COVID-19 Onset

Policyholders:

- Dental industry was hit hard by the suspension of all services except emergency procedures per State Executive Orders/Mandates
 - Dental practices significantly reduced patient volume or closed entirely
 - OMS more likely to treat emergent cases

Employees:

- Stay at Home order went into effect 3/15/2020
- Immediate fully remote work environment initiated

Regulators:

- Policyholder premium adjustment mandates
- Cancellation and non-renewal moratoriums
- Loosening restrictions on telemedicine
- Request for updated business continuity plans
- Survey requests to monitor solvency of companies

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Crisis Management Plan in Action

- Quickly assembled a team, led by CEO
- Daily meetings with senior leaders communicating action and resolution pertaining to their business function
- Conducted additional special meetings with the Board of Directors
- Formed special COVID-19 Communication Team
- Identified key stakeholders and the appropriate communication channels
- Released consistent messages to stakeholders efficiently

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Response to Policyholders

- Immediate 50% Premium Relief for Full-Time Policyholders for 90 Days
- Deferred Premium Due Dates
- Frequently Asked Questions
- New forms for policyholders to use to address risks of treatment during pandemic and telehealth forms
- Webinars to deliver patient safety risk management educational seminars
- Collaboration with American Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons (AAOMS)
- Policyholders appreciated goodwill provided by the Company



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Response to Employees

- Moved all staff to a fully remote environment
 - Disaster Recovery Plan
 - Reimbursement initiative supporting ergonomic safety
- Provided additional training
 - Cybersecurity awareness
 - Virtual application training (Microsoft Teams, NASDAQ Boardvantage, Go-To Meeting, etc.)
 - Effective management techniques in the virtual work force
 - Time management skills
- Implemented continuous performance management with bi-monthly check-in to enhance staff development, set priorities, assess progress and determine new objectives
- Provided frequent COVID-19 updates, as well as organizational highlights (operational and financial metrics)
- Elevated the employer/employee relationship by enhancing trust, appreciation and empathy



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Response to Regulators

- Partnered with external regulatory counsel and communicated COVID-19 premium relief effort
- Modified policyholder system to accommodate deferral of premium by state
- Submitted business continuity plans to state DOIs and AM Best (requirements varied by states)
- Added endorsement defining “telehealth”
- Appreciated the efforts the Company had taken
- Renewed AM Best A rating

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Post-Crisis Communications

Policyholders

- Pre-pandemic patient volume did not occur in all cases
- Some policyholders remain part-time
- Telehealth –
 - OMS community utilized for initial consultations or post-op visits where there were no complications involved
 - Dental community utilized telehealth less (estimate 10% to 15% of the Company’s insured base)

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Post-Crisis
Communications

Employees

- OMSNIC plans to operate in a hybrid model
- Waiting to determine future office space needs until the “new norm” is in place
- Maintain heightened cyber security awareness
- Encouraged creativity and increased emphasis on innovation
- Digitalization and streamlining/rethinking workflows
- Educational return-to-work video developed to explain new office safety rules

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Post-Crisis
Communications

Regulators

- Business as usual, with heightened scrutiny or concern on:
 - Potential claims
 - Lingering financial crisis
 - Business continuity plans, operational results, capital adequacy
 - Emerging legislation on cyber security
- Anticipate higher levels of accountability and enforcement moving forward

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Lessons Learned

- Empathy goes a long way to strengthen Brand and Reputation
- Timely, consistent and effective communication to key stakeholders is high priority
 - Stakeholder satisfaction increases with transparency and when expectations are set and managed
 - When crisis subsides, it is imperative to remain in frequent contact with key stakeholders
- Crisis Management Plan – Review quarterly and perform tabletop exercises annually
 - Include Crisis Communication as a component of your Crisis Management Plan
 - Review and analyze how the actual crisis played out and integrate lessons learned into your Crisis Management Plan

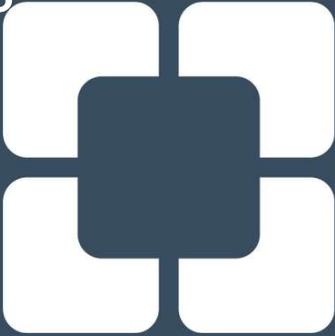
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MPL Association: Crisis Communications

May 20, 2021

Michele J. Johns, JD, CPHRM
Cleveland Clinic
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Crisis Scenario

- September 16, 2006
- 5 infants in NICU of Indianapolis Hospital administered 10,000 units of heparin rather than 10 unit heparin flush
- 3 deaths, 2 others recovered



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Communication

- Internal
 - Impacted Families
 - Death or future course of care
 - Transfer for other families
 - Senior Leaders
 - Incident Command type response
 - Team Members
 - Board of Directors



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Communication

- External
 - Governmental Affairs: Mayor, Governor
 - The Joint Commission/State DOH
 - Media/Press
 - Press Conference held that day
 - Local news
 - Good Morning America



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Protecting the Brand

- Recovery for Families
 - Chaplains assigned to each family
 - Wrote off of all medical bills and resolved liens
 - Paid for funeral expenses
 - Medical Malpractice cases of 3 infants that died resolved at full value within weeks



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Supporting the Team

- Just Culture Analysis – Internal review
- Employee Assistance Program
- Representation for criminal investigation
- Well wishes from nurses across the country
- Welcome back to work



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Follow up Communication

- External
 - Finance Committee of Board
 - Reinsurance markets
 - Tell the story/share experience



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Panel Discussion

- Questions from the expert

