

FDA: Risk Communication is Key

Welcome to Andy's Take. I am Randall Lutter, FDA's Deputy Commissioner for Policy, and I am pleased to bring you this week's Andy's Take.

No matter how good FDA's science and our science-based decisions are, if we want to truly protect and promote your health, we must communicate our decisions in a way that you can understand. Because the science is complex and often uncertain, involving risks and benefits, communicating that science—risk communication—is as important and as challenging as any activity FDA undertakes.

My take is that to do this most effectively, we must take full advantage of the science of risk communication—and FDA can do this much better. We can more effectively share both risk and benefit information to help you and your family make more informed independent decisions about the

products we regulate. Indeed, we've already made a good start.

This past Friday, FDA's recently created Risk Communication Advisory Committee met for the last time this year. As a fitting milestone to mark the successful completion of its first three meetings, the Committee made several recommendations that will help enhance FDA's risk communication activities. The recommendations advise us to treat risk communication as a core activity and plan and provide resources to support it. They advise us to take advantage of outside expertise to get the research we need so that our risk communications are grounded in scientific standards. They also advise us to develop a process to involve you—both the public and healthcare professionals—in deciding how we communicate with you.

The FDA has already taken the Committee's advice to heart and started on the path toward more effective communication. We created an internal Communications Council to act on the Committee's advice and engage in much broader activity as well, and we are in the process of making our practices more consistent throughout the agency. It is vitally

important that we find more efficient ways to ensure that needed research gets conducted, messages are tested with people like you before they are issued, and that we evaluate the impact of our communications. For example, we are working on ensuring that you and your family receive useful and understandable information about your medicines from your pharmacist. This is so when you shop for FDA regulated products, like food, drugs, or cosmetics, you can easily understand the risks and benefits of the product and decide what's best for you.

We look forward to hearing from you in the future about how we're doing.

Please check back here next week to listen to Dr. Frank Torti, FDA's Principal Deputy Commissioner, give his take. [FDA](#)

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FDA's Risk Communication Advisory Committee Web Page:
www.fda.gov/oc/advisory/OCRACACpg.html

About Andy's Take

Through this communications column on the FDA Web site, Commissioner of Food and Drugs Andrew C. von Eschenbach, M.D., will discuss weekly FDA issues of interest to the American consumer and occasionally preview upcoming FDA issues and events.



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