

A “special forces” approach to vaccination reporting

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Context

- A 2016 study showed that 42% of Romanian students aged 15 are functional illiterates;
- PISA tests show that almost 39% of high school students are “science” illiterates and 72% have very low levels of science knowledge.
- The public discourse is flooded with anti-vaccination theories. All this, doubled by lack of access to vaccination and mistrust in the Romanian state, fueled one of the biggest measles epidemics in years.
- The best journalism is done outside big, traditional newsrooms. Independent journalists sourced some of the best stories, such as the business operations of religious cults in Romania and the blatant instances of malpractice by highly revered doctors.

Immunisation reporting

- With Franklin Aphel
- A combined approach: training and fellowships and mentoring



Reporting on Vaccines: Frames, Facts, Fictions and Feelings

- 16 to 20 journalists
- 9 doctors, experts in vaccination issues
- 3 public communication experts
- Topics:
 - why covering vaccination is a matter of public interest;
 - how to effectively capture stakeholder "voices" in covering vaccination;
 - distinguishing apparent issues and real problems;
 - addressing dilemmas and legitimate concern regarding vaccines;
 - exploring useful source characteristics: authority, notoriety, scientific knowledge, etc.;
 - understanding how vaccination issues impacts not only health but also economic development, poverty, equity, education, gender, ect.;
 - how to cover vaccination in an attractive manner, avoiding sensationalism;
 - countering ant-vax communications;
 - ways to maintain consistent coverage of the topic; and,
 - developing ongoing media campaigns.

Learning from previous successes'

- The Rosalynn Carter Fellowships for Mental Health Journalism
2008 - 2014



Learning from previous successes'

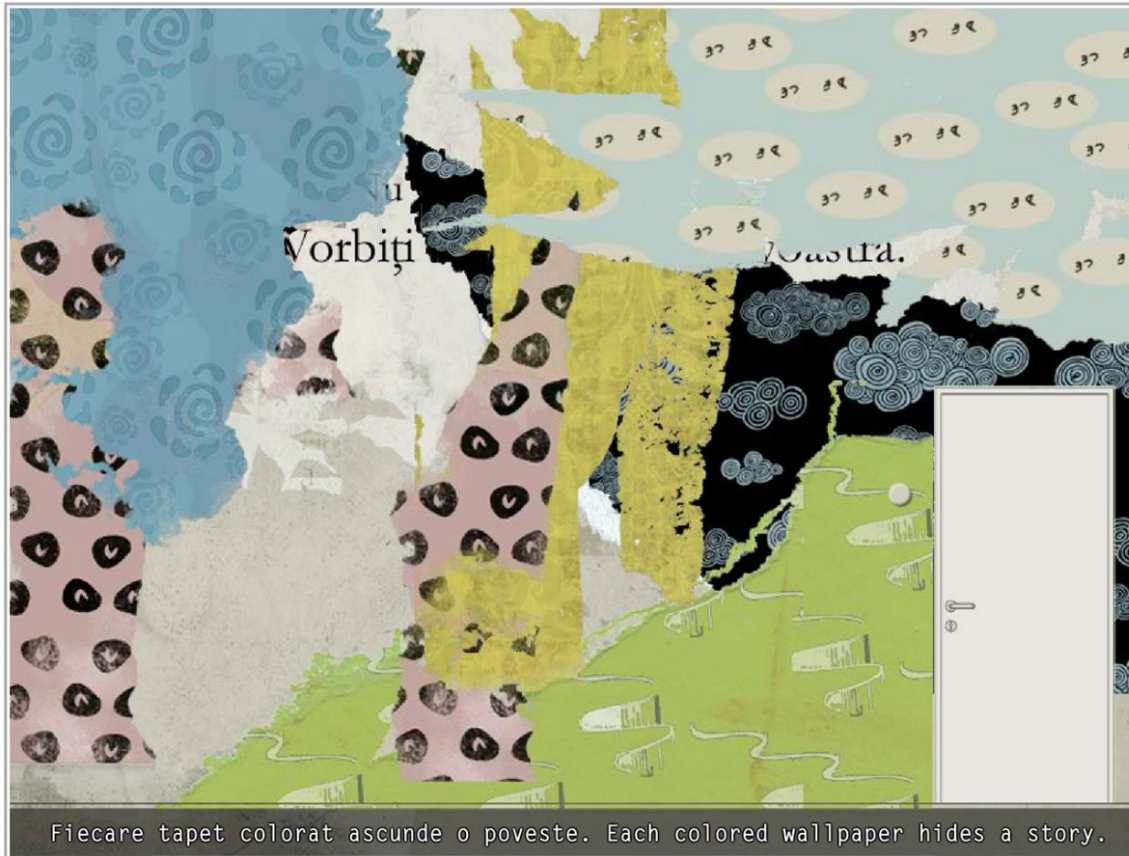
- The Rosalynn Carter Fellowships for Mental Health Journalism 2008 - 2015
- 6 Romanian editions: mental health was put for the first time on the public agenda
- Topics:
 - people with mental illnesses working toward living socially fulfilling lives in the community.
 - the symptoms of and treatment available for people with depression
 - the mental health problems associated with family loss as a result of a lack of support systems for affected families
 - the Romanian mental health care system
 - how mental illnesses are treated in rural areas within Romania in comparison to other countries
 - mental health issues associated with obesity
 - post-traumatic stress disorder among Romanian soldiers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan
 - post-traumatic stress disorder in children exposed to family violence

“The Ugly one has come” – multimedia stories about depression

„A venit Urâta!”

Un român din cinci s-a întâlnit sau se va întâlni o dată în viață cu „Urâta”. Neagu Djuvara sau Mihaela Miroiu au trecut deja printr-o astfel de întâlnire. Povestea lor și a altor eroi o puteți vedea acum. De ce eroi? Pentru că poveștile lor sunt adevărate și pline de curaj. Se întâmplă pentru prima dată în România: cei care s-au întâlnit cu „Urâta” vorbesc în public despre ea.

Fiecare tapet colorat ascunde o poveste.



“The Ugly one has come” – multimedia stories about depression

- September 2009: First multimedia product on a highly sensitive topic: depression, done by Vlad Mixich and Laurențiu Colintineanu;
- 70.000 hits; 112 comments on Hotnews.ro

The No Syndrome



The No Syndrome

- August 2013 – October 2014
- A series of articles on post-traumatic stress disorder among Romanian soldiers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan done by journalists Alina Mătiș and Florin Negruțiu from Gandul.info
- Journalists started from “Romanian soldiers have lots of humor and this is why we don’t have any case of PTSD ever registered by the Romanian army” and ended up, one year later, with the Defense Ministry announcing the first psychological screening performed 60 days after the return of the troops from combat "for the early identification of cases with PTSD symptoms” by the newly created the Center for Socio-Behavioral Investigations.

Conclusions

- Offering resources to journalists (money, trainings, access to national and international experts) will generate high-quality reporting and will create a network of highly prepared journalists, that can also act as resource persons for the rest of the profession.
- Training the public health specialists is also crucial for long-term results. Preparing and empowering them to offer relevant and news-worthy information to journalists, but also to create their own channels, may be a solution to increase the quality of vaccination related content in the public space.