

THE VISIBLE VIRUS: MEDIA REPRESENTATIONS OF VIRUS AND PANDEMICS

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How do media deal with virus and pandemics? Using empirical data from the Science in the Media Monitor, the paper will focus on media dynamics in relation to virus alerts and related issues: e.g. media tendency to emphasize/dramatise these situations, the tendency to present expert advice in polarised, controversial form; finite 'cycles' of media attention that often tend to disregard subsequent, evolution/solution phases.

The question of 'naming' and labelling virus alerts in the media will also be addressed, particularly in relation to the recent case of H1N1 influenza virus.

Finally, the role of media dramatised public 'demonstrations' – e.g. the cases of Ministers or TV News Speakers eating chicken in front of TV cameras to reassure the audience during the 'bird flu' alert – will also be analysed.