

"Communicating in a Healthcare Crisis"

Wayne L. Pines, editor, 2007, 401 pages, FDAnews, \$295.00

Review by Norman M. Goldfarb

"Communicating in a Healthcare Crisis" is an indispensable guide to managing communications if a clinical trial or, for that matter, anything else goes badly wrong. The competence with which an organization handles its communications with study subjects, physicians, patient advocacy groups, employees, customers, suppliers, investors, the media, etc. will largely determine how well it weathers the storm. The book is over 400 pages long, so you probably want to read it before reporters start calling.

This book has been selected for
[The First Clinical Research Bookshelf](#)
Essential reading for clinical research professionals

If you want to know one thing, and only one thing, about managing communications in a crisis, it is to prepare in advance. There is, of course, a lot more to it than that. The book includes 17 chapters of advice and 33 case studies written by people who were personally involved in health crises such as Tylenol (1982), generic drugs (1988), Tambocor (1989), hearing aids (1993), Anthrax (2001), and Vioxx (2002).

The book provides countless tips, such as:

- Identify your crisis management team in advance, including the leader and primary spokesperson.
- Prepare fact sheets, web pages, graphics, video clips, etc. that are available if needed.
- Be prepared to open up a "war room" with extra communications equipment, telephone lines, televisions, office supplies, etc.
- Obtain the perspectives and balance the priorities of the public relations, legal, regulatory and other departments.
- Discuss the facts and do not speculate.
- Show sincere compassion, but do not accept or assign blame until the dust settles.
- Enlist third-party, credible experts who can help tell your story.
- Monitor progress by asking outsiders (including reporters) for their assessments.

The book is available at <http://www.fdanews.com>

Reviewer

Norman M. Goldfarb is Managing Director of First Clinical Research LLC, a provider of clinical research best practices information, consulting and training services. Contact him at 1.650.465.0119 or ngoldfarb@firstclinical.com.