

Public Health Storytelling Webinar includes Longtime Writer, Executive Producer of Grey's Anatomy

In a world of rapidly diminishing attention spans, how can organizations successfully engage audiences to promote public health?

This challenge was the focus of *What's Your Story? Creating Narratives to Support Public Health*—a Partnering for Vaccine Equity webinar exploring how storytelling can be used for effective public health communication.

Fittingly, the webinar began by turning to Hollywood for a lesson on storytelling fundamentals.

The first presenter, Zoanne Clack, MD is an emergency medicine physician and a medical advisor, writer and executive producer on the popular ABC television series *Grey's Anatomy*. Dr. Clack has been with the show since it began in 2005—helping to craft storylines that explore real-world medical science and public health issues.

“On Grey's what we write is fiction, but what we tell is truth,” Dr. Clack explained. “We are very thoughtful about how we tell our stories since we realize that a lot of people are getting at least some of their medical information and knowledge from television.”

She emphasized the importance of engaging audiences in an authentic and emotional way to create messages that resonate.

“Storytelling is taking the truth of the world, and wrapping it into an emotional, honest experience that the audience can relate to,” Dr. Clack said.

Dr. Clack was followed by Erica Rosenthal, PhD, from the Norman Lear Center at the University of Southern California. Dr. Rosenthal oversees the Center's vast research on the impact of media narratives on health and social issues. She noted that emotionally compelling stories do not just entertain—they can also inform and change an audience's perceptions.

“Stories overcome the resistance or pushback that we tend to experience to more overt persuasive messages,” Dr. Rosenthal said. “As a result, stories can fly under the radar and influence us, even without our conscious awareness.”

The webinar also featured Alex Fajardo, executive director of El Sol Neighborhood Educational Center in Southern California and Jorge Perez, president and CEO of the YMCA of Greater Cincinnati. Both speakers have successfully used storytelling to drive innovative public health campaigns.

The panel covered storytelling fundamentals, challenges, and tips that will benefit anyone looking to get their public health message heard. And all presenters showed compelling images and video clips of their work.

To read more about the webinar, click [here](#).

A full recording of the event can be accessed [here](#).