

EFFECTIVENESS AND EFFICIENCY IN PUBLIC HEALTH: THE NEED OF CITIZEN AND PATIENT EDUCATION FOR APPROPRIATE HEALTH DEMAND. THE CASES OF BSE, SARS AND AVIAN FLU

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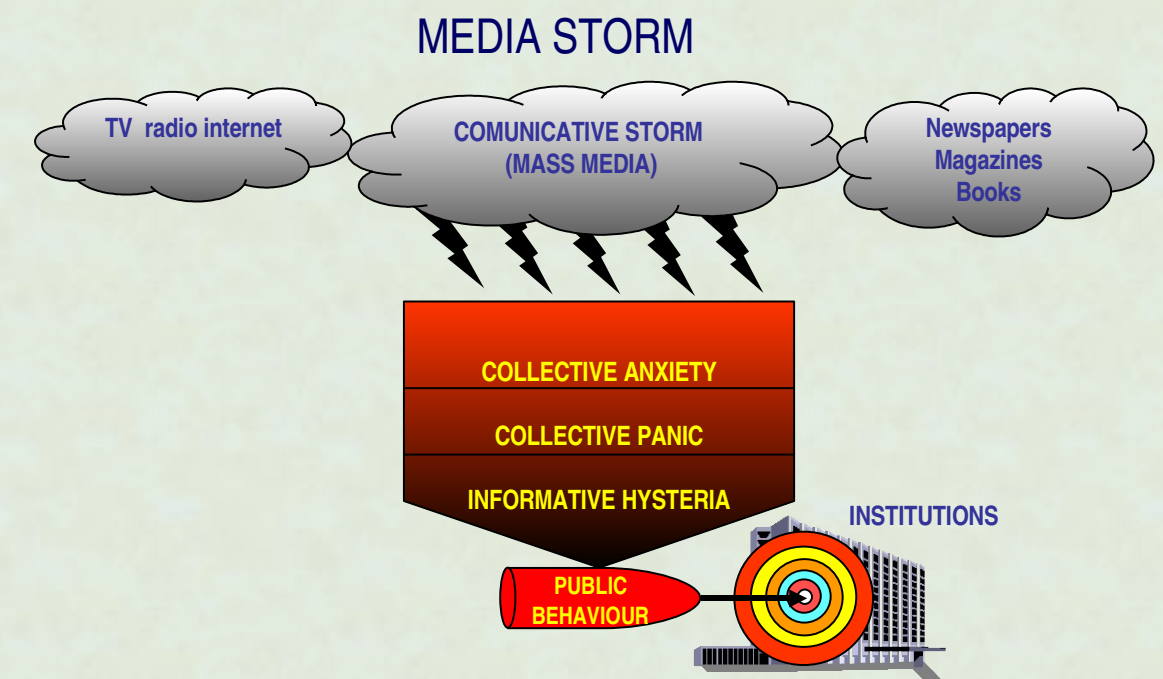
**Director of Canton Ticino's Health Office

INTRODUCTION

In the present society the need of understanding "health related topics" becomes more and more important for citizens and patients that would like to be protagonist of their own choices, but receive the most part of information from mass media, mainly from television, and for this reason can be strongly influenced by a market oriented communication. The health demand of the public derives from his perception of needs, that sometimes are not real but induced by economic or political interests and scientific misunderstanding and prejudices. This problem becomes more evident in the case of "media storms", that is when a health related event is reported by mass media with a so high emphasis and frequency that it represents at least the 50% of the total health information spread in a particular period of time.

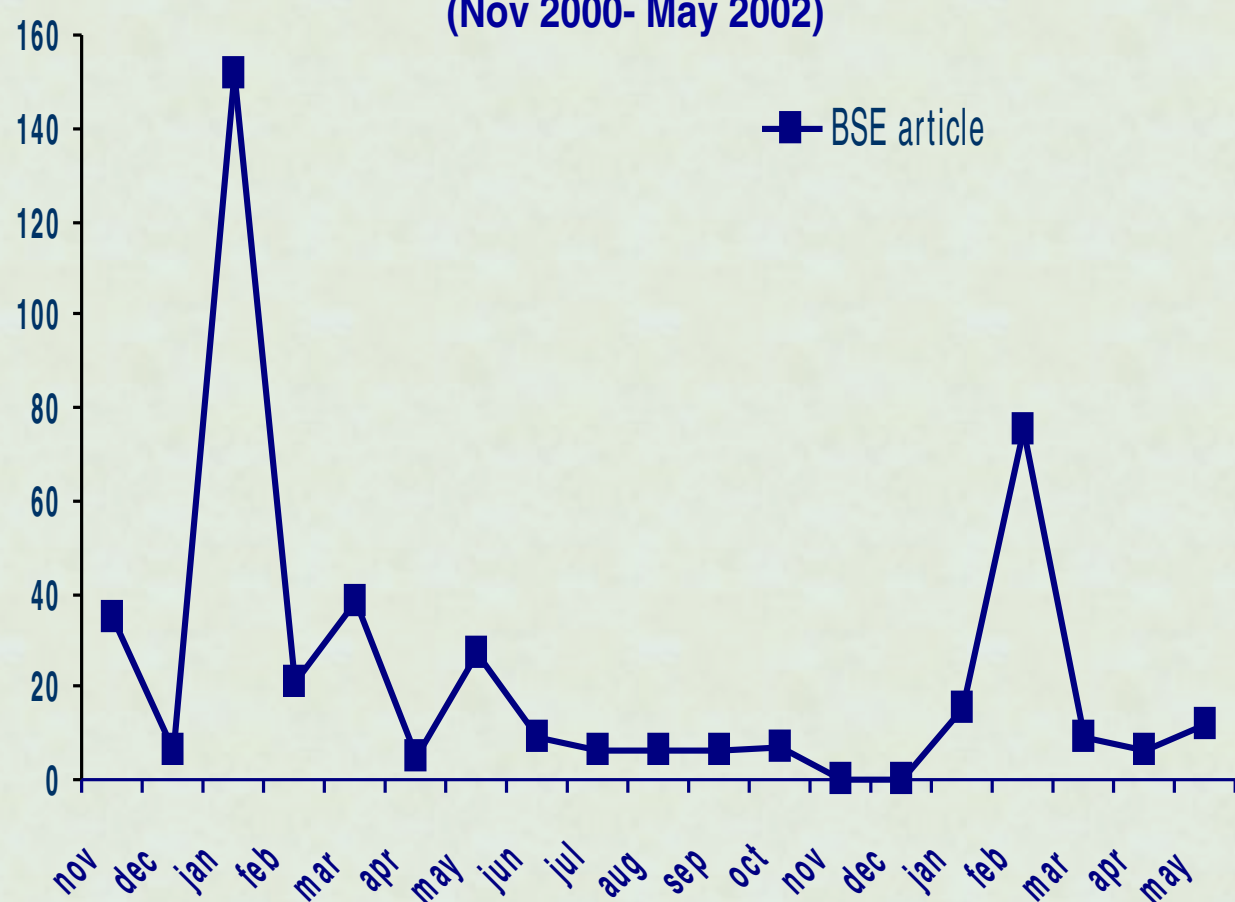
METHODS

The Health Communication Observatory (HCO) of Pisa University since 1999 has monitored and collected the health related articles published by the three most important Italian newspapers: "La Repubblica", "La Stampa" and "Il Corriere della Sera". In this paper three cases of media storm are studied: BSE, SARS and avian flu



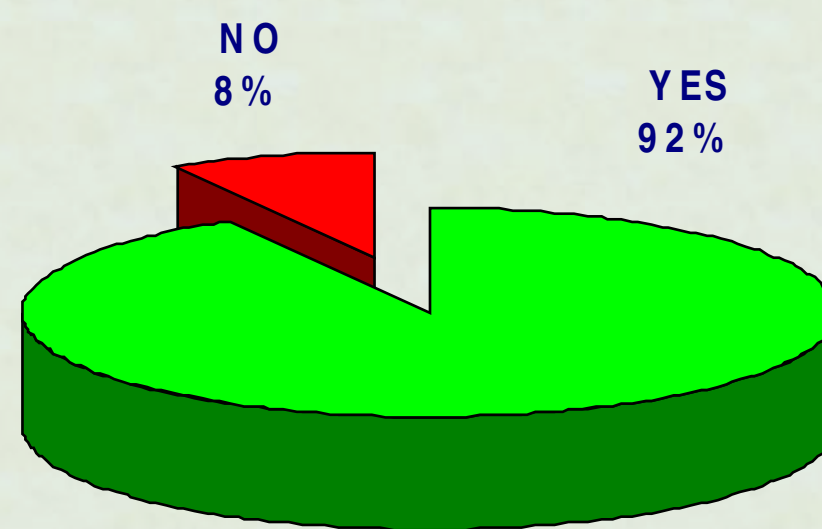
MEDIA COVERAGE

DISTRIBUTION OF ARTICLES (Nov 2000- May 2002)



EFFECT

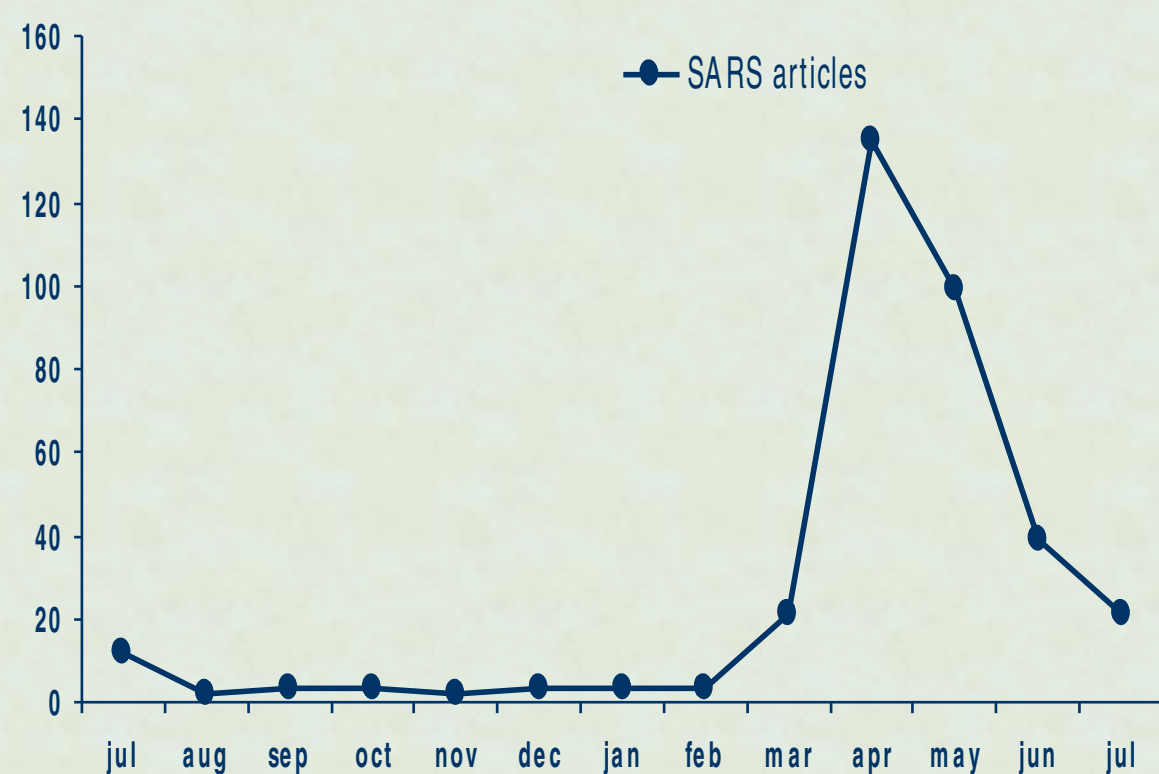
THE NEWS ON "MORBO OF THE CRAZY COW" HAVE MODIFIED HIS ALIMENTARY HABITS?



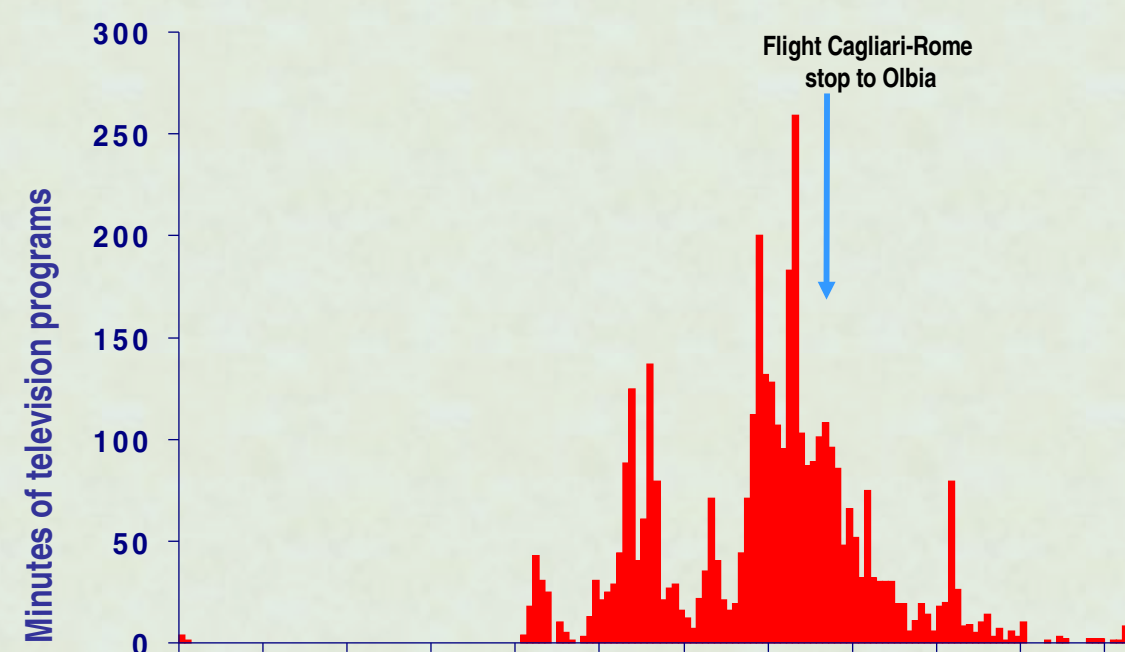
BSE



DISTRIBUTION OF ARTICLES (Jul 2002- Jul 2003)



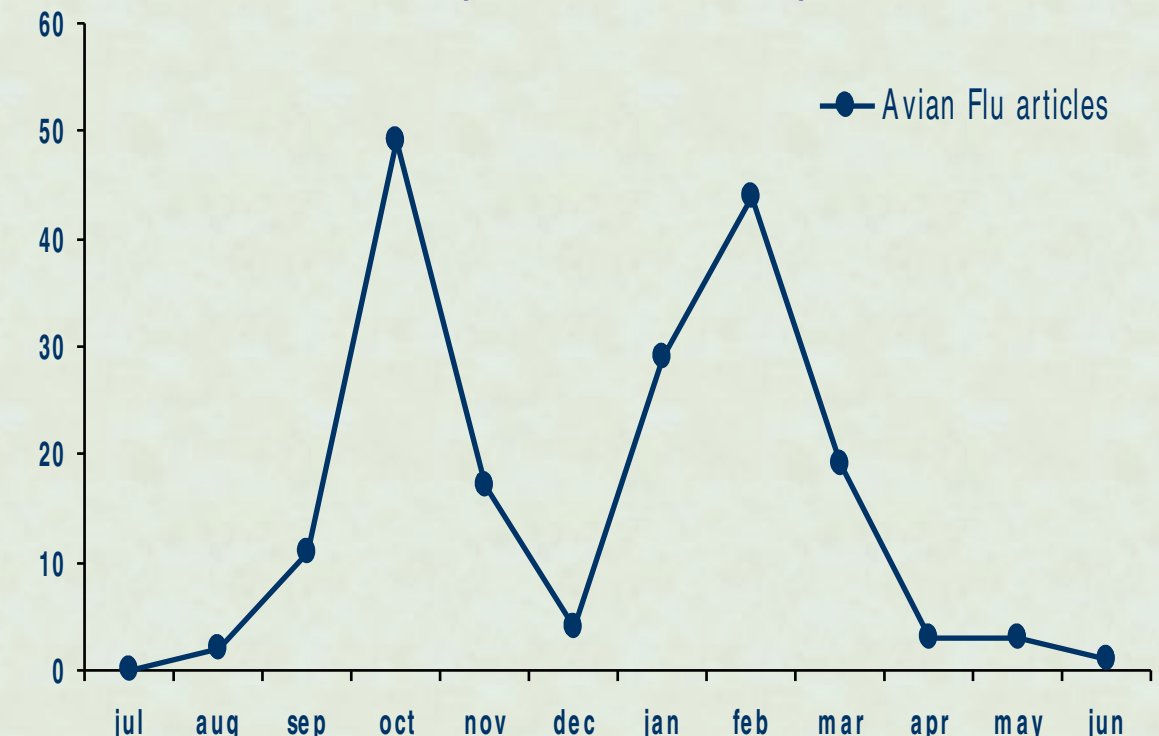
THE SARS IN THE TELEVISION NEWS (Data CARES Pavia, 2003)



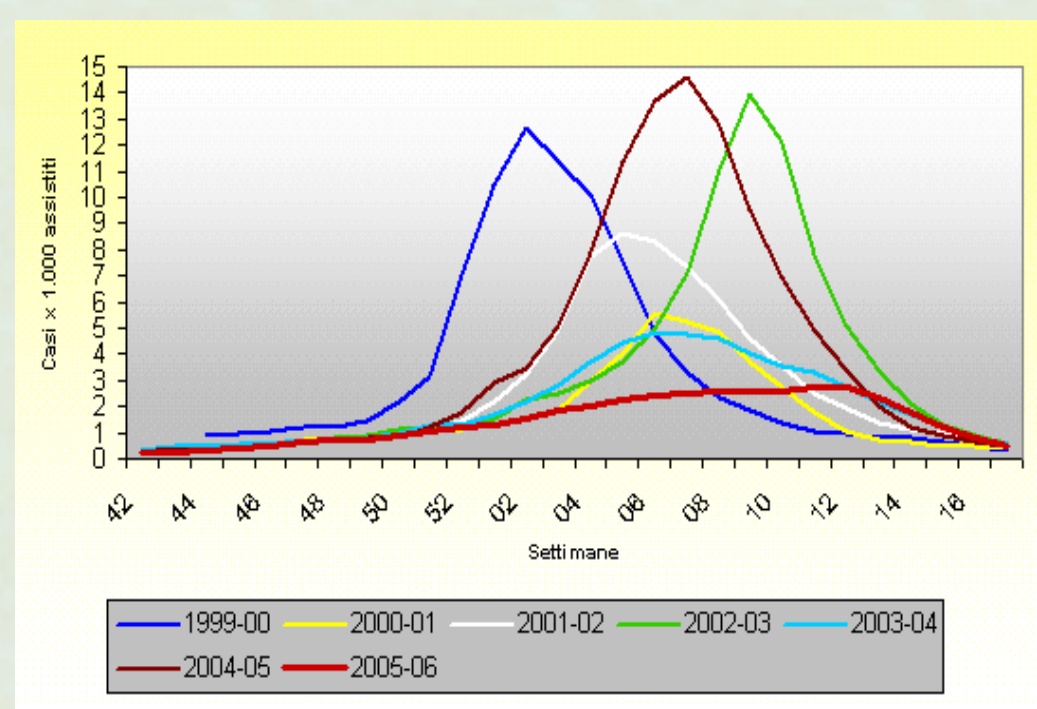
SARS



DISTRIBUTION OF ARTICLES (Jul 2005- Jun 2006)



FLU ' S INCIDENCE IN THE SEASONS 99-00, 00-01, 01-02, 02-03, 03-04, 04-05,05-06



AVIAN FLU



"...40 million of the produced chicken (31% of the production) at the end of the year were still present (entire or in cut parts) in refrigerated cells of the companies and in all national refrigerated warehouses" – UNA (Unione Nazionale Avicoltura, dec 2005) .."

CONCLUSIONS

These cases show the need to educate citizens for a better understanding of mass media health related information improving their health literacy since the primary school.