

## University of Groningen

### Making news about medicines

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# TRANSFER OF INFORMATION

The most simple form to describe the transfer or diffusion of information is shown in figure 1.

S sends information or a message to R. In this model the message is comparable to a virus. The virus is transmitted from one person to another and does not change. The distribution of the information can be described like an epidemiological model.

This simple model overlooks the fact that both the sender S and the receiver R, encode, decode, and interpret the information (see figure 2).

The information received by R is interpreted by R and can have a different meaning for R compared to S. Another receiver R' or R'' can interpret and use the information in a totally different way. The concept diffusion of information, which refers to a rather passive process in which, for

example, a molecule diffuses through a membrane from one site to another and is not changed during this process, seems to be inappropriate to describe the communication process because (the meaning of) the information can change during the process.

The transfer of information is, in fact, even more complicated because the information can serve different functions. The same message can be used in different ways and can have different meanings. Furthermore, the fact that a message can have both a knowledge and an emotional component, makes description of the pro-

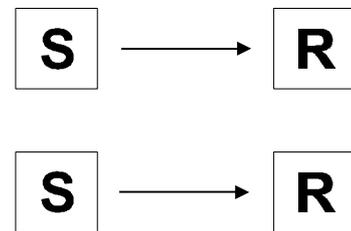


Figure 1

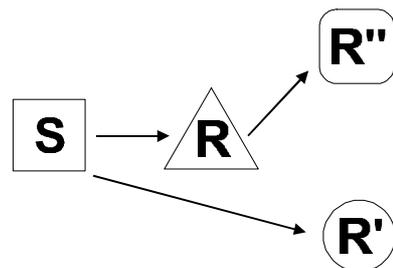


Figure 2

cess more sophisticated. For example, if one reads the same scientific paper twice the paper can have two different meanings, some information might have been more important the first time, other bits of information might be more important the second time (see figure 3).

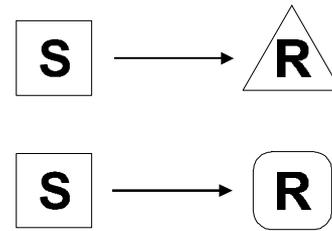


Figure 3

Some sources/senders send information to journalists unasked (S), while other sources, for example scientific journals, are chosen by the journalist (S'). Information obtained from these sources is selected and interpreted by the journalist. Sometimes more information is needed and other sources are consulted (S''). The original message is changed into a newspaper or magazine article by the journalist/gatekeeper. During this process of communication, the meaning of information may change (a short introduction to communication models can be found in annex 1). R = receiver/reader of the article. The receiver again selects information to read and interprets the information. Different receivers (R,R') can attach different meanings to the same article. A receiver can become a sender once (s)he tells someone else (R'') about what (s)he has read (see figure 4).

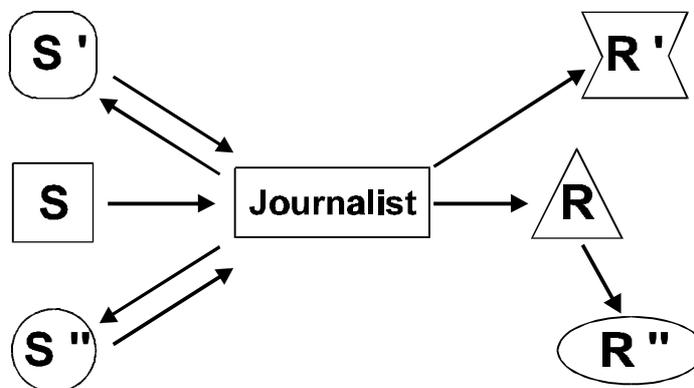


Figure 4

Position and role of journalist in the transfer of information

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