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Report on Research Compliance Volume 17, Number 7. June 25, 2020 Pandemic Offers Change to Showcase 'Hope' Animal Studies Offer to Improve Human Health

By Jane Anderson

Communications and messaging to the public involving research should emphasize hope and the human condition, not the role animals play in any research successes.

That's the word from Paul McKellips, strategic communications director of the U.S. Army, in a June 5 webinar from the NIH Office of Laboratory Animal Welfare.[1] He explained that progress on therapeutics and vaccines for COVID-19 and other conditions would resonate more with the public when communications specialists used specific messaging principles, particularly a technique called micro-messaging.

"I'm looking for some hope," McKellips told an online audience. He said that micro-messaging, targeted locally, can help to explain and gain support for animal research. "If you can target that message to me locally, then it's going to provide me with some hope. I'm not alone. I realize there are professionals, unnamed professionals, unknown professionals, who are working around the clock to do everything they can possibly do to improve the human condition. It's not, as they say, brain surgery, and it's not rocket science. It's strategic, it's targeted and it's local."

Messaging around the COVID-19 pandemic has "changed everything," McKellips said. "The amazing part of this is, it has frontline impact. It has personal impact—the way that we socially distance, the way we have to wear face coverings. It has global impact. In a span of just 90 days, we have seen the world focus on things that we never thought they would focus on before, but here we are."

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