

Health journalism editorial guidelines KENYA

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments.....	3
Why it matters to have guidelines for health journalism	3
What are the guidelines about?	5
Points to remember	7
Editor’s Note	7
Professionalism, rights and responsibilities of health journalists	8
Content and accuracy	8
Independence	9
Integrity.....	9
Responsibility.....	10
Our principles for ethical health journalism	10
Journalists’ rights and responsibilities	11
Do no harm	13
Different ways to tell good health stories, but the same standards and ethics apply	18
Social media tips for health journalists.....	20
What makes a good health journalist?	21
Implementing the health journalism guidelines.....	22
Ten important things to bear in mind when reporting on health stories	22
The New Constitution and health.....	23
END NOTES.....	25

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Why it matters to have guidelines for health journalism

Health journalism involves packaging complex stories that are relevant to aspects of our physical and mental wellbeing. These aspects include: socio-economic factors, culture, religion, beliefs, level of education, customs, age, gender, scientific and the advances in science and technology. Health stories, which may at first glance seem local, often represent ongoing and important stories of global relevance.

Think of HIV and Aids – it is the one health story that transcended any scepticism about ongoing coverage of the disease. It required journalists to understand not only the science behind the disease, but also the international and local politics that drive it, as well as the ethics and human rights linked to related medical research and provision of healthcare services. HIV and Aids also called on journalists to consider the human story and human rights aspects of the disease.

The same is true for many other health stories, which bring all the different strands of society and culture together; stories that require that journalists translate highly complex scientific terminology and development jargon into clear and understandable language with relevant messages that benefit their audiences.

Health journalism, like any other journalistic writing, needs to answer the “5 W’s and an H” of journalism: Who what, when, where, why and how. Journalists need to understand the relevant scientific terminology and concepts because in health reporting any misleading or factually inaccurate information is potentially dangerous. It can provoke unfounded public reaction, and

Who are MARPS

- Sex workers.
- men who have sex with men.
- injection drug-users.

(The three groups bear a disproportionate burden of the HIV epidemic. These populations are often marginalized in ways that make accessing care and treatment more difficult than for most others.)

may directly or indirectly result in injury, disease, loss of income. Misleading health reporting can cost lives. Good health journalism separates reality from myth, superstition and unproven theories. .

In Kenya policy makers have been known to pay more

attention to what the media says than what is written in highly technical health or scientific journals. A 2012 study by Britain's Institute of Development Studies (IDS) found that policymakers in six developing countries said that their most common source of information was "details from news items."ⁱ News stories ranked higher than journal papers, government policy papers, and even research produced by high-profile international organizations as sources of information.

When reporting on research studies, health stories should try to answer at least four questions:

1. Why is the study or report important?
2. How does it affect the person/case study directly?
3. What are the broader implications for people, the community, the region, etc?
4. What should be done? Remember that global is local and local is global, and that health stories in Kenya are quite likely relevant in other places in the world.

Relevant and easily understood health information can empower individuals, families, communities and nations with the knowledge and applicable skills needed to solve or cope with the country's numerous health problems. It is equally important to remember that there are professional ethics and laws that govern how we write health stories: laws that protect those whose health stories we are telling, especially concerning libel and invasion of privacy. Health stories often deal with people who are vulnerable and whose dignity and privacy we hold in our hands. Journalists therefore also need to know and understand their professional ethics and social responsibility, know which laws apply when they tell health stories of vulnerable and most at risk populations, (referred to as MARPs by health practitioners), as well as vulnerable populations, like the elderly, people who have suffered abuse, or are ill.

Quick checklist

- **Follow the evidence.**
- **Include the voices of those you write about.**
- **Understand that denial and stigma related to disease (and not only HIV for instance) lead to discrimination.**
- **Tell your audience that HIV prevention works – for all communities.**

So, why do we need health journalism guidelines? By adopting a set of guidelines journalists will have a checklist to help them fill the existing gaps when they report on health. It is also important to remember that health issues continue to emerge, posing new challenges to reporters and newsrooms. Kenya's new constitution makes specific mention of proper health

care being one of the key deliverables with responsibilities for both the national and county governments. Health journalists must familiarise themselves with the relevant chapters and sections that focus on the various aspects of health if they are to credibly report on the provision of health services in the counties and the role of national government, continuously checking that they are accountable to the people of Kenya.

What are the guidelines about?

The guidelines are a central reference of best practice in health journalism for the various media houses, media organizations and journalists working together with the support of Internews, and guided by the Media Council of Kenya. It is intended to help both seasoned professionals and new journalists hold themselves accountable to the principles of health journalism. It contains some examples of how we can apply ethical principles to our work, and what the important questions are to ask ourselves when reporting health for the benefit of the Kenyan audience. This is of particular importance as credible health journalism should reflect diversity and should take special care when reporting on vulnerable groups.

The guidelines facilitate evidence-based, fair and accurate reporting, and 'should be read within the context of Kenya's media's commitment to professionalism and ethical conduct, and the existing Code of Ethical Conduct for the Practice of Journalism in Kenya, developed by the Media Council of Kenya.

The editorial guidelines identify the challenges that health journalists face and are also designed to help provide balanced and credible coverage of various aspects of health issues that impact Kenyans. As such, health journalists should strive to:

- Be objective, factual and sensitive to culture, customs, socio-economic status and levels of education
- Ensure at all times that accurate and appropriate language is used.
- Convey health stories or information in a manner that the receiver understands it exactly as the sender intended.
- Demystify folklore, falsehoods and pseudo-science associated with various aspects of health, including miracle cures.
- Respect and uphold confidentiality.
- Obtain informed consent – which must still be used with much caution especially when reporting about vulnerable individuals, including children. Even if parents or guardians agree always remember children are in no position to give consent and might not understand current and future implications or impacts of stories they share.
- Avoid discrimination and stigma. Don't make generalisations about particular groups or individuals. (I.e. do not fall into the trap of sensationalizing a disease, and by extension those who are affected by it, or living with it.)
- Ensure gender and diversity sensitive reporting.

The guidelines are about better journalism and not just about avoiding attitudes and language that add to a burden of stigma on those who are already ill. In addition, the guidelines tune in to the determinants of health and the underlying issues that make better and more compelling stories, that focus on the who, when, where, how, why, as well as the what.

- Ensure sensitivity on child-related stories.
- Ensure balanced and responsible coverage, separating reality from myths and superstitions.
- Think about the impact of the coverage on your audience: Your story may have an effect on

vulnerable individuals or people connected to the person. Provide accurate, balanced and credible information, rather than sensationalizing the issue. It can save lives.

- Avoid over-simplification, and never “dumb” down the science related to a particular disease.
- Be cautious when dealing with stories that are not based on proven knowledge.
- Steer clear of exaggerated health claims, and don't sentimentalize it. But don't forget the emotional impact that your story may have.
- Avoid using vulgar or offensive words and expressions.
- Good health reporting educates, informs with appropriate references and solutions

Points to remember

Responsible journalism is never:

Defamatory: Good journalism does not repeat inaccurate allegations, peddle falsehoods.

Derivative: Originality is at the center of good health journalism. It excludes plagiarism and malice.

Corrupt: Like in all other journalism beats, health reporters should not accept bribes or seek favors.

And always ask: Is my story complete? In other words:

1. Is this story accurate? Are the facts and names correct and do I believe the information is true?
2. Have I made every effort to confirm the information is true?
3. Is this story impartial, fair and balanced? Does it credibly include various or alternative views?
4. Does it follow the evidence and accurately report on the science behind the health story?
5. Is this responsible journalism? Was this news obtained without bribes or illegal actions and does it protect sources and not violate the law, including press laws?

Editor's Note

The editor plays a very important role in telling health stories. Every day editors are faced with different health stories to cover, and with limited number of reporters they must prioritize. The

“As far as possible and practical, each media house should have specialist journalists to cover health stories. Make sure the reporters understand the ethical guidelines of covering health stories, especially in relation to interviewing and identifying individuals who may be affected by an epidemic and need to be handled with sympathy, understanding and respect for their privacy.”

- Macharia Gaitho. Chairperson, Kenya Editors Guild

editors guide their reporters on aspects of health coverage, which might be different from coverage of other subjects, for example sports, politics or business. For instance, health stories need to be backed by scientifically sound facts.

Professionalism, rights and responsibilities of health journalists

Content and accuracy

Our objectivity and credibility is paramount. As health journalists, we are bound by the professional standards of truth, accuracy, and credibility. For every report filed we seek to ensure that we:

- **Are vigilant in selecting our sources:** We always ask, weigh and disclose any relevant information related to financing, advocacy, personal and other interests when telling public health stories.
- **Investigate possible links between sources of information including researchers and those who promote health products, new technologies and therapies.**
- **Have multiple sources of information**
- **Understand the process of medical research and phases of drug trials in order to report accurately.**
- **Preserve journalistic independence by avoiding dependence on media releases.** Be sure to credit the source of information.
- **Be sensitive and ensure appropriate use of library, archival file footage or old footage.** The use of footage from the past may be inappropriate, misrepresentative, or embarrassing to individuals if used today. It may not even fit the topic of the day. Media house should have policies on the use of health-related file footage.
- **Show respect.** Illness, disability and other health challenges facing individuals must not be exploited merely for dramatic effect.
- **Avoid vague, sensational language** (cure, miracle, breakthrough, promising, dramatic, etc.)
- **Make sure anecdotes are appropriately chosen and used in a fair and balanced manner.** Avoid anecdotal evidence, and make sure that personal stories used as examples are consistent with the larger body of evidence.
- **Benefits of any treatment need to be credibly balanced by potential risks.**
- **Clearly define and communicate areas of doubt and uncertainty.** Explain what doctors don't know as well as what they do know.
- **Seek out independent experts to scrutinize "breakthrough claims" by evaluating the quality and quantity of evidence.** Avoid uncritical acceptance of official or expert pronouncements
- **Strive to include information about costs.**
- **Ensure that the total news package (headlines, teases, graphics, and promotional material) does not oversimplify or misrepresent.**

- **Consider the public good and interest as the primary measure when choosing health stories on which to report.**
- **Health journalists should follow up.**
- **Distinguish between advocacy and reporting.** There are many sides of a health care story. It is not the job of the journalist to take sides, but to present an accurate, balanced and complete report.

Independence

Strive to be independent from the agendas and timetables of journals, advocates, and industry and government agencies. We undertake to nourish and encourage original and analytical reporting that provides audiences/readers with context. We are the eyes and ears of our audiences/readers, and do not consider ourselves the mouthpieces of industry, government agencies, researchers or health care providers.

Integrity

Health journalists should remember that their loyalties reside with the truth as the peoples' watchdog and therefore at all times strive to:

- **Preserve a dispassionate relationship with sources**, avoiding conflicts of interest, real or perceived.
- **Avoid any personal or financial interest** with any company in any field related to what is being covered. This includes actual and potential competitors of subjects about whom we report.
- **Remember that journalists face other potential conflicts of interest.** Think about questions such as: Have you been a patient at a particular hospital? Do you have a relative with a specific disease that could unduly influence your handling of a story? It is our responsibility to recognize these conflicts and prevent them from influencing stories or story choices. The best way to do this is by constant, open and honest discussion with other reporters, editors or producers, as well as to disclose this information if deemed necessary and appropriate.
- **Deny favoured treatment to advertisers and special interests** and resist their pressure to influence news coverage.
- **Refuse gifts, favours, and special treatment.** Refuse meals from drug companies and device manufacturers and refuse to accept unsolicited product samples sent in the mail.
- **Weigh the potential benefits involved in accepting fees, honoraria, free travel**, paid expenses from organizers of conferences or events against the desire to preserve our credibility with the audience and the need to avoid even the appearance of a conflict of

interest. **Also weigh the potential benefits of accepting awards** from organizations sponsored by an entity with a vested interest in health care against our need for credibility.

- **Weigh the potential conflict in accepting support** from public, private, or foundation sources.

Responsibility

We must improve our coverage of the structural, institutional, political, financial and ethical issues in public health, and we have a responsibility to encourage editors to pay attention to public health stories. We also have a responsibility to ensure appropriate coverage of health policy and its impact on Kenyans, understanding that such policies and public health contribute greatly to public debate and potential wellbeing. We know that this information is relevant and important for our readers and viewers, and we strive to work harder within our newsrooms to keep health care coverage comprehensive and proportional. While brevity and immediacy are touchstones of news reporting, health and medical reporting must include sufficient context, background and perspective to be understandable and useful to audiences/readers. Stories that fail to explain how new results or other announcements fit within the broader body of evidence do not serve the interests of the public. It is our responsibility as health journalists to ensure that we raise the standards of health reporting.

Our principles for ethical health journalism

Journalists have the duty and privilege to seek and report the truth, and to encourage public dialogue aimed at building the community. In return for the public's trust in us, we practice our craft responsibly and respect our fellow citizens' rights in so doing.

Accuracy and fairness

- We do not let our biases influence our reporting.
- We disclose conflicts of interest.
- We ensure that people have the right of reply to present their points of view prior to publication.
- We respect people's civil rights, including their right to privacy and a fair trial.
- We do not alter images, videos or sound to mislead the public.

We are independent and transparent

- We do not favour advertisers and special interests.
- We do not accept or solicit gifts or favours from those we might cover.

- We do not report about subjects in which we have financial interests.
- When we go undercover as part of an investigative story, we will at all times clearly explain why we did not need to conceal our identities.
- As journalists, we do not endorse political candidates or causes.

We keep our promises

- We identify sources of information, except when there is a clear and pressing reason to protect their anonymity.
- We explain the need for anonymity when we decide to grant it.
- We always independently substantiate facts given by unnamed sources.
- If we promise to protect a source's identity, we do so.

We respect diversity

- We seek to capture in our stories the diverse values, viewpoints and lives of the people in our communities.
- We avoid stereotypes of race, gender, age, religion, ethnicity, geography, sexual orientation, gender identification, disability, physical appearance and social status.

We are accountable

- We will answer to the public for our reporting and conduct.
- When we make a mistake, we correct it promptly and ungrudgingly, and in a way that matches the seriousness of the error.

Journalists' rights and responsibilities

The Kenyan Constitution of 2010 is very clear on Freedom of expression and Freedom of the media. Article 33 says:

(1) Every person has the right to freedom of expression, which includes—

- (a) Freedom to seek, receive or impart information or ideas;
- (b) Freedom of artistic creativity; and
- (c) Academic freedom and freedom of scientific research.

(2) The right to freedom of expression does not extend to—

- (a) Propaganda for war;
- (b) Incitement to violence;
- (c) Hate speech; or
- (d) Advocacy of hatred that—
 - (i) Constitutes ethnic incitement, vilification of others or incitement to cause harm; or
 - (ii) Is based on any ground of discrimination specified or contemplated in Article 27 (4).

(3) In the exercise of the right to freedom of expression, every person shall respect the rights and reputation of others.

The subsequent Articles 34 and 35 have relevance for the freedom of the media and access to information.

Freedom of the media

34. (1) Freedom and independence of electronic, print and all other types of media is guaranteed, but does not extend to any expression specified in Article 33 (2).

(2) The State shall not—

- (a) Exercise control over or interfere with any person engaged in broadcasting, the production or circulation of any publication or the dissemination of information by any medium; or
- (b) Penalize any person for any opinion or view or the content of any broadcast, publication or dissemination.

(3) Broadcasting and other electronic media have freedom of establishment, subject only to Licensing procedures that -

- (a) Are necessary to regulate the airwaves and other forms of signal distribution; and
- (b) Are independent of control by government, political interests or commercial interests.

(4) All State-owned media shall—

- (a) Be free to determine independently the editorial content of their broadcasts or other

communications;

(b) Be impartial; and

(c) Afford fair opportunity for the presentation of divergent views and dissenting opinions.

(5) Parliament shall enact legislation that provides for the establishment of a body, which shall—

(a) Be independent of control by government, political interests or commercial interests;

(b) Reflect the interests of all sections of the society; and

(c) Set media standards and regulate and monitor compliance with those standards.

Access to information.

35. (1) Every citizen has the right of access to—

(a) Information held by the State; and

(b) Information held by another person and required for the exercise or protection of any right or fundamental freedom.

(2) Every person has the right to the correction or deletion of untrue or misleading information that affects the person.

(3) The State shall publish and publicize any important information affecting the nation.

Do no harm

When it comes to health, we are all vulnerable. However, we acknowledge that within our society, some groups are more vulnerable than others. While the ethical and professional principles underpinning our work do not change, we do however understand that we need to be especially sensitive to groups that are vulnerable due to cultural, societal, legal and religious practices and beliefs.

The following principles should be considered when reporting on certain groups, such as people who use drugs, men who have sex with men, and sex workers

In general

- Ensure that your story does no further harm to the subject of the story/article.
- Strive to ensure that fundamental human rights and ethics of privacy, confidentiality, dignity, informed consent, etc. are observed.
- Be aware of the possible outcomes of the story, whether positive or negative, before filing it. In December 1998 Gugu Dlamini, 36, was beaten to death by fellow South African citizens including neighbours accusing her of shaming them by going public, on radio and TV, that she was HIV positive
- Make sure that your story is fair and balanced, and that it includes the underlying/predisposing factors that contribute to certain social behaviors and/or identities.
- Recognize and respect individuals' right to self-determination.
- It is desirable that journalists are trained to write about the health and human rights aspects of reporting on vulnerable groups, which are referred to as "key populations" or Most at Risk Populations (MARPS) in public health terminology.

When reporting on people who use drugs within a public health context

- Avoid using references to people who use drugs that imply that the addicts are voluntarily engaging in the habit for pleasure.
- Be aware that the dependency stage of people using drugs is a health condition and can only be treated medically and not through forced withdrawal.
- We should consider engaging with representatives of networks that work with different groups when writing about a specific vulnerable group. For instance, if you are writing a story about an injecting drug user, contact the Nairobi Outreach Service Trust (NOSET) who run the Support for Addiction Prevention and Treatment in Africa (SAPTA) program.
- We should not interview an individual from this group without fully explaining the purpose and use of the article and seeking their written consent. However, this comes with a caveat, as you should not interview a person using drugs who is under the influence of the drug or in a state of withdrawal.
- The media should never declare the true identity or post a photograph/video of such individuals without their explicit informed consent.
- The media should strive to gain a deeper and better understanding of the issues affecting people who inject drugs so as to write from an informed perspective.
- Media articles should ensure that they do not cause adverse reactions or physical, psychological or emotional harm to individuals who use drugs, their family, or other concerned stakeholders, for instance civil society organizations working in the field of harm reduction.
- The media should not pay people who use drugs to aid them in procuring drugs and or ask them to demonstrate drug use practices.

- The media should strive for balance in their reporting, and not write articles or stories that focus on select issues to sensationalize the story.
- The media must respect the health and human rights of people who use or inject drugs as stipulated in the Kenya Constitution of 2010.

When reporting on men who have sex with men within a public health context¹

- The gay community in Kenya prefers to be referred to as gay rather than homosexual, and gay men do not necessarily prefer the term “men who have sex with men” or MSM in short. As language and its associations is dynamic, check-preferred terminology at the time of your writing.
- Journalists should clearly distinguish between male sex workers and gay men.
- When news is covered in Kiswahili, the community prefers the term “*wapenzi wa jinsia moja.*”
- Journalists should be sure to use an unbiased approach and neutral tone when refer to the gay community or homosexual individuals.
- Editors should strive to provide coverage of issues in the gay community that do not pigeonhole members only in terms of health concerns or negative perceptions.
- Any story relating to gay people as a group within the context of a health story should strive to include the expert opinions of health officials or specialists, as well as with members of the community.
- Respect for people’s right to privacy should be considered when covering any sexuality-related issues, including for same sex relations.

When reporting on sex workers within a public health context

- The media should not use stigmatizing terminology when reporting on people engaged in sex work. For example, some sex workers prefer to be addressed as such without adding “commercial” to their name or to being referred to as “prostitutes.” In Kiswahili the preferred term is “*wauza ngono*” rather than “*Malaya*” or other terminology which they consider demeaning.
- Journalists should consider the human rights of sex workers, and should strive to focus on their welfare and health, rather than using an entertainment lens, as is common practice.

¹***Please note that the term men who have sex with men includes men who do not self-identify as homosexual***

- Journalists should strive to balance their reporting with regard to sex workers, for instance the work being done by sex worker groups to prevent the sexual exploitation of children or the health education and safe sex campaigns being run among sex workers.
- Reporting should not be biased and presumptive, insinuating for instance that all sexual worker need rehabilitation.
- Observe the right of the sex workers to dignity, privacy, and bodily integrity.
- The disclosure of individuals' names should be a case by case decision, and people's identities should not be revealed without their consent.

Children's Rights and the Media: Guidelines and Principles for Reporting on Issues Involving Childrenⁱⁱ

These guidelines were adopted by journalists' organisations from 70 countries at the world's first international consultative conference on journalism and child rights held in Recife, Brazil, on May 2nd 1998.

1. All journalists and media professionals have a duty to maintain the highest ethical and professional standards and should promote within the industry the widest possible dissemination of information about the International Convention on the Rights of the Child and its implications for the exercise of independent journalism.
2. Media organisations should regard violation of the rights of children and issues related to children's safety, privacy, security, their education, health and social welfare and all forms of exploitation as important questions for investigations and public debate. Children have an absolute right to privacy, the only exceptions being those explicitly set out in these guidelines.
3. Journalistic activity which touches on the lives and welfare of children should always be carried out with appreciation of the vulnerable situation of children.
4. Journalists and media organizations shall strive to maintain the highest standards of ethical conduct in reporting children's affairs and, in particular, they shall:
 - a. Strive for standards of excellence in terms of accuracy and sensitivity when reporting on issues involving children;
 - b. Avoid programming and publication of images which intrude upon the media space of children with information which is damaging to them;
 - c. Avoid the use of stereotypes and sensational presentation to promote journalistic material involving children;

- d. Consider carefully the consequences of publication of any material concerning children and shall minimize harm to children;
 - e. Guard against visually or otherwise identifying children unless it is demonstrably in the public interest;
 - f. Give children, where possible, the right of access to media to express their own opinions without inducement of any kind;
 - g. Ensure independent verification of information provided by children and take special care to ensure that verification takes place without putting child informants at risk;
 - h. Avoid the use of sexualized images of children; use fair, open and straight forward methods for obtaining pictures and, where possible, obtain them with the knowledge and consent of children or a responsible adult, guardian or carer;
 - i. Verify the credentials of any organization purporting to speak for or to represent the interests of children;
 - j. Not make payment to children for material involving the welfare of children or to parents or guardians of children unless it is demonstrably in the interest of the child.
5. Journalists should put to critical examination the reports submitted and the claims made by Governments on implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in their respective countries.
 6. Media should not consider and report the conditions of children only as events but should continuously report the process likely to lead or leading to the occurrence of these events.

Mental Health

Many journalists have generally misunderstood mental health; many do not follow up or write about its causes. Mental illnesses can take many forms, just as physical illnesses do. Mental disorders are still feared and misunderstood by many, yet we can begin to tackle the fear when people learn more about mental illness. What most people don't know or are not told is that all mental illnesses can be treated. As journalists it's our responsibility to ensure that this information reaches our audiences, and that we do not stigmatize or perpetuate stereotypes through our stories.

Health journalists not just in Kenya but worldwide, have given minimal professional attention to the quality and quantity of mental health news. They routinely use words and descriptions that

stereotype, discriminate and dehumanize those having mental and behavioral disorders. However, even within the medical world, mental health is often isolated from other public health issues with patients being placed in treatment facilities equated with jails. It is important to recognize that various aspects of mental health -which the World Health Organization says affect at least one in four people globally - are linked to brain functions, considered the “last frontier” of the biomedical research.

A valuable document for health journalists to access is the *World Health Organization’s Mental Health Action Plan 2013-2020*. In Kenya it is important to know what the Constitution says about mental health. Health journalists should know the available treatment and prevention strategies, if any, at both national, county and constituency level. Credible reporting of mental health offers room for specialization. It is a professional niche that is largely untapped. It is important to know policies, laws, institutions, associations and experts dealing with various aspects of mental health.

Different ways to tell good health stories, but the same standards and ethics apply

Social Mediaⁱⁱⁱ

Social media and blogs are important elements of journalism. They close the gap and narrow the distance between journalists and the public. They encourage lively, immediate and spirited discussion. They can be vital newsgathering and news-delivery tools. However, journalists should uphold the same professional and ethical standards of fairness, accuracy, truthfulness, transparency and independence when using social media as for on air and on all digital news platforms.

Health journalists can use social media as a source for their stories, to seek comments from experts, to get public opinion, to generate discussion or a platform where they can market their stories once they are published or produced.

It’s important to consider the following when using social media as a journalist

Truth and Fairness

- Social media comments and postings should meet the same standards of fairness, accuracy and attribution that you apply to your on-air or digital platforms.
- Information gleaned online should be confirmed just as you must confirm scanner traffic or phone tips before reporting them. If you cannot independently confirm critical information, or reveal your sources; tell the public how you know what you know and what you cannot

confirm. Don't stop there. Keep seeking confirmation. This guideline is the same for covering breaking news on station websites as on the air. You should not leave the public "hanging." Lead the public to completeness and understanding.

- Twitter's character limits and immediacy are not excuses for inaccuracy and unfairness.
- Remember that social media postings remain active in online archives. Correct and clarify mistakes, whether they are factual mistakes or mistakes of omission.
- When using content from blogs or social media, ask critical questions such as:
 - What is the source of the video or photograph? Who wrote the comment and what was the motivation for posting it.
 - Does the source have the legal right to the material posted? Did that person take the photograph or capture the video?
 - Has the photograph or video been manipulated? Have we checked to see if the metadata attached to the image reveals that it has been altered?
- Social networks typically offer a "privacy" setting, so users can choose not to have their photographs or thoughts in front of the uninvited public. Capturing material from a public Facebook site is different from prying behind a password-protected wall posing as a friend. When considering whether to access "private" content, journalists should ask:
 - Does the poster have a 'reasonable expectation' of privacy?
 - Is this a story of great significance?
 - Is there any other way to get the information?
 - Are you willing to disclose your methods and reasoning?
 - What are your journalistic motivations?

Accountability and Transparency

- You should not write anonymously or use an avatar or username that cloaks your real identity on newsroom or personal websites. You are responsible for everything you say. Commenting or blogging anonymously compromises this core principle.
- Be especially careful when you are writing, tweeting or blogging about a topic being covered by you or your newsroom. Editorializing about a topic or person can reveal your personal feelings. Biased comments could be used in a court of law to demonstrate a predisposition, or even malicious intent, in a libel action against the news organization, even for an unrelated story.
- Just as you keep distance between your station's advertising and journalism divisions, you should not use social media to promote business or personal interests without disclosing that relationship to the public. Sponsored links should be clearly labelled, not cloaked as journalistic content.

Image and Reputation

- Remember that what is posted online is open to the public (even if you consider it to be private). Personal and professional lives merge online. Newsroom employees should recognize that even though their comments may seem to be in their "private space," their words become direct extensions of their news organizations. Search engines and social mapping sites can locate their posts and link the writers' names to their employers.
- There are journalistic reasons to connect with people online, even if you cover them, but consider whom you "friend" on sites like Facebook or "follow" on Twitter. You may believe that online "friends" are different from other friends in your life, but the public may not always see it that way. For example, be prepared to publicly explain why you show up as a "friend" on a politician's website. Inspect your "friends" list regularly to look for conflicts with those who become newsmakers.
- Be especially careful when registering for social network sites. Pay attention to how the public may interpret Facebook information that describes your relationship status, age, sexual preference and political or religious views. These descriptors can hold loaded meanings and affect viewer perception.
- Keep in mind that when you join an online group, the public may perceive that you support that group. Be prepared to justify your membership.
- Avoid posting photos or any other content on any website, blog, social network or video/photo sharing website that might embarrass you or undermine your journalistic credibility. Keep this in mind, even if you are posting on what you believe to be a "private" or password-protected site. Consider this when allowing others to take pictures of you at social gatherings. When you work for a journalism organization, you represent that organization on and off the clock. The same standards apply for journalists who work on air or off air.
- Bloggers and journalists who use social media often engage readers in a lively give-and-take of ideas. Never insult or disparage readers. Try to create a respectful, informed dialogue while avoiding personal attacks.

Social media tips for health journalists

Don't rely on just one source for a story; cross check with other social media sites and sources. You should use social media as a tip for a story that you will follow up later.

- It's important for any health journalist to follow and like health-related sources, which can vary from individuals, health journals to organizations. They are great sources for stories.

- Never re-tweet anything that is not verified. Once you hit the re-tweet button it means you have endorsed something.
- When commenting on any health story you should not give personal views, especially if you are planning to do a story on the same issue. Your audience might assume that you have taken the same personal approach to that story.
- There are many spoof/fake accounts in the Twittersverse. Always double-check your information especially when trying to quote an authority in health, for example the World Health Organization.
- Journalists working in health need to be very careful about what they say on their social media accounts. The onus is not on the public to differentiate between your personal and private lives; when you have to give a personal view, clearly qualify it with a disclaimer.

What makes a good health journalist?

Should media houses have specialized health journalists? Should all journalists be able to cover health? These are some of the questions that regularly crop up when it comes to health journalism. The general sense is that media houses are best served when they have journalists who specialize in health, given the complexity and nuances involved in reporting these stories. It is especially true if journalists are reporting on the science behind the health stories, or reporting on vulnerable groups of people. By struggling with these dilemmas and questions, Kenya's media is not alone – it is a conversation

Here are some pointers from Internews health journalism trainers. You are on the right track IF:.

1. You can provide credible and verifiable sources for your stories.
2. You have some background on the health topic that you are writing/talking about.
3. You can demonstrate professional distance from the story.
4. You are up to date with the latest trends and information, including events that mark special days designated to commemorate certain health problems.
5. You have a good network of experts that you can turn to whenever you need clarification on certain issues, or can tip you off when new stories emerge.

6. You understand that every health story is critical in that people who agree to share their personal stories trust you with information that they don't necessarily share with other people. It means that you cover such stories with deep respect.
7. You update or follow-up on your stories
8. You are aware that good health stories influence policy.
9. You tell health stories in a compelling way without sensationalizing them.
10. You know when to stop. You are an investigative journalist. All health stories should be very well investigated.

Implementing the health journalism guidelines

Ten important things to bear in mind when reporting on health stories

1. Always state your source. Did you interview someone, did you hear about the information at a conference, or did you find it in a journal article or a book? If you can, post a hyperlink to your source information.
2. If you're quoting a study, make sure to write or talk about the size and nature of the study. Don't be shy to also write or talk about the limitations of the study.
3. Write or talk about the stage of the research if you're referencing a study. Are the findings preliminary and when can people expect final results, new treatments or technologies?
4. Be very careful about cause and effect stories; when you report a link between two things, be clear about any evidence that says that one causes the other, or not, as may be the case.
5. Do include any risks mentioned, but be sensible and realistic and never sensationalist.
6. Frame new findings in such a way that you discuss it within the context of other information and evidence, especially when you're writing or talking about public health stories.

7. Make sure that you apply due diligence in all your stories. In other words, be wary of

Always remember that you are a critical link between good health journalism and storytelling. Never be the cause of the disconnect.

information that sounds too good to be true, such as miracle cures for instance.

8. Never give health advice if you cannot distinguish between evidence and belief.

9. Never call something a cure when it is not one.

10. Headlines should not mislead the reader about a story's contents, and quotation marks should not be used to dress up overstatements.

The New Constitution and health

Kenya's New Constitution offers unique opportunities to focus on various aspects of basic human needs and rights that should be at the core of good health journalism in a developing nation. Health journalists should innovatively use the constitution as an important source of story ideas.

ARTICLE 43 (1)

Every person has the right—

(a) To the highest attainable standard of health, which includes the right to health care services, including reproductive health care;

(b) To accessible and adequate housing, and to reasonable standards of sanitation;

(c) To be free from hunger, and to have adequate food of acceptable quality;

(d) To clean and safe water in adequate quantities;

ARTICLE 43 (2)

▶ A person shall not be denied emergency medical treatment.

▶ **Art. 42**

▶ Every person has a right to clean and healthy environment.

▶ **Art.53 (1)**

- ▶ Every child has a right –(c) to basic nutrition, shelter and health care

▶ **Art 56**

- ▶ . The state shall put in place affirmative action programmes designed to ensure that minorities and marginalized groups- (e) have reasonable access to water, health services and infrastructure.

▶ **ARTICLE 26**

- ▶ Every person has the right to life

- ▶ The life of a person begins at conception

- ▶ A person shall not be deprived of life intentionally, except to the extent authorized by this constitution or other written law.

- ▶ Abortion is not permitted unless, in the opinion of a trained health professional, there is need for emergency treatment, or the life or health of the mother is in danger, or if permitted by any other written law.

- ▶ **County health facilities and pharmacies;**

- ▶ **Cemeteries, funeral parlours and crematoria; and**

- ▶ **Refuse removal, refuse dumps and solid waste disposal.**

- ▶ Ambulance services;

- ▶ Promotion of primary health care;

- ▶ Licensing and control of undertakings that sell food to the public;

- ▶ Veterinary services (excluding regulation of the profession);

- ▶ **NATIONAL LEVEL**

- ▶ National referral health facilities

- ▶ Health Policy

▶ **COUNTY FINANCING HEALTHCARE**

Budgetary Allocations

- ▶ Grants /Donations
- ▶ Equalization Fund
- ▶ Monies raised at county level
- ▶ Loans
- ▶ Constituency Development Funds

END NOTES

ⁱ Source: <http://www.msh.org/our-work/health-areas/hiv-aids/most-at-risk-populations-marps>

ⁱⁱ *Source: International Federation of Journalists <http://www.ifi.org/en/articles/childrens-rights-and-media-guidelines-and-principles-for-reporting-on-issues-involving-children>.

ⁱⁱⁱ Source: http://www.rtdna.org/article/social_media_blogging_guidelines#.Uw9Uy-OSyJ8