



Infographics in Medical and Scientific Communication in the COVID-19 Pandemic

Krzysztof Stępniak

Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw

k.stepniak@uksw.edu.pl

ORCID: 0000-0001-9716-8835

ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic as “the scientific and social challenge of the 21st century” has been the subject of research and analysis since its inception. The researchers’ area of interest also includes infographics—visual presentations of information provided to society about the risks caused by the new pathogen. **Research methods:** The article provides a review of the literature on the use of infographics during the pandemic, found in scientific databases in June–July and October 2021. Additional articles were added based on the snowball principle from the reference literature of previously searched publications. Material from the web was also included, mainly by data journalists. **The aim** of the review was to identify 1) the directions and aspects of research on the use of infographics in the pandemic; 2) the advantages and disadvantages of its use, noticed by both scientists and data journalists, and the disclosure of the difficulties faced by the latter when visualizing data, and determining, 3) whether the current knowledge about the use of infographics, especially in health care, was confirmed in research conclusions. **Results and conclusions:** The review of the literature on the use of infographics in the pandemic shows that they are important explanatory tools which visualize verbal content and strengthen their memorization. The first studies undertaken in the pandemic concerned the effectiveness of infographics as a carrier of WHO recommendations, showing that they significantly influenced their understanding, but did not lower the level of anxiety of the respondents. Researchers also pointed to the need to search for new forms and ways of communicating knowledge, explaining, and simplifying it, and signaling uncertainty, primarily in the form of infographics. In the pandemic, journalists were particularly responsible for communicating data—in the face of scientific uncertainty, fragile public moods, and manipulation of data by politicians. **Cognitive value:** The article shows the usefulness of infographics as a communication tool not only in crisis situations, but also in science, pointing

to new areas of multidisciplinary scientific exploration emerging from research on infographics (understanding their message, impact on people's behavior). Data journalists who are looking for new forms of information transmission in the big data environment—effective, credible, and consistent with journalistic ethics also have special experiences with the pandemic.

KEYWORDS

COVID-19 pandemic, data journalism, data visualization, infographics, visual communication