

The research analysed 1,500 newspaper and magazine articles and television programmes in 2005, carried out 45 interviews with people who were the subject of major media stories and carried out 20 focus groups to examine how the media frame risk in relation to GM food and biotechnology:

- Different framings of problems and solutions in this field are evoked and emphasized through various competing verbal, metaphorical and visual cues. This framing that defines the risks and the benefits may be more important in shaping how people respond to risks than the balance of objective factual information.
- Key 'discursive cues' in framing of risks are:
- *Contrasting labels*, which often marks a battle in language between different sources. In the GM debate terms such as 'cross-pollination' compete with 'contamination' and concepts such as 'weeds' compete with 'biodiversity'. In debates about stem cell research concepts such as 'human embryo' or 'blastocyst', 'therapeutic cloning' or 'medical experiments' compete.
- *Competing analogies or historical reference points* for new developments. GM crops may be related to an uncontroversial technology such as cross-breeding, or to the BSE crisis. Stem cell research may be viewed in reference to 'medical breakthroughs' such as the discovery of penicillin, or the more sinister associations of eugenics.
- *Visual imagery*: fields of waving golden GM corn compete with images of white-coated protesters uprooting crops. The embryo/blastocyst is the central visual icon in the stem cell debate -magnified images of the cluster of cells used by stem cell researchers compete with representations of more developed embryos.
- The analysis of media and focus groups shows that the notion of contamination dominates media discourse. Proponents of GM have failed to get the issue framed as a new approach to cross-pollination.
- Embryo predominates over blastocyst, but only because it is a more familiar term. Focus group members did not find stem-cell research distasteful.

Further research continues.

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