



ESTRATTO

Nuevos superhéroes

La relación mediática entre los jóvenes y los médicos

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Vuoi consultare altre risorse? Vuoi richiedere le versioni integrali?

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2.4 The COVID-19 and the "new" heroes: in search of effective communication for children

The doctor profession changes a lot in public opinion because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the virus that has influenced all of our lives since the early months of 2020. At this time, doctors and health workers began to fill the pages of newspapers as subjects who, more than any other, every day and every night have taken a crucial role in saving lives in hospital centres, putting themselves at risk of contagion (Marcus, 2020). Taking into account the progressive erosion of the obligation to medical care in recent decades (Orentlicher, 2018), doctors and nurses appear as heroic figures, the war metaphor widely used in the first months of emergency (Di Cesare, 2020; Lévy, 2020; Lippi 2020). This is because they have to fight at the forefront of the ruthless war against COVID-19 to save the children and the entire population (along with scientists and other specialists involved in the race to find the vaccine). Doctors and nurses are represented as heroes in the famous work *Game Changer* (2020) by the British street artist Banksy, where a child prefers to play with the puppet representing a nurse in a classic superhero pose instead of Batman and Spiderman. In these difficult moments, doctors and researchers (epidemiologists, first of all) have been exposed to mediatic coverage and diffusion through mass media in order to inform - and sometimes reassure - people about the state of the pandemic. In this article we are not still be able to give value or to count exactly what has been the impact on children or young people imagery, but we can notice that institutions and public organization have started to create informative products, addressed to the youngest, to have also an institutional voice, in search of that authority and communicative clarity that in some ways has failed in radio, web and television salons. Three examples in this sense are the explanatory videos produced in spring 2020 respectively by the GEDI Group (La Repubblica), the FIMP - Italian Federation of Primary Care Pediatricians and the San Raffaele Hospital in Milan. In the video produced by the GEDI Group *What is the coronavirus: the pandemic explained to children* is significant that, just at the beginning of the video, the narrator says, referring to the COVID-19: "if you are afraid or you have not understood what it is... Ask your parents first". Parents are then identified as the first person able to provide authoritative answers to children, which could otherwise be badly addressed by information not authoritatively disseminated by their peers, social networks or mass media. The doctor, however, does not leave the scene permanently, because in the continuation of the video the protagonist of the video turns out to be a doctor, a scientist, who illustrates to children the information necessary to counter the pandemic. FIMP - Italian Federation of Primary Care Pediatricians has produced a poster and a cartoon video addressed to children entitled *Coronavirus: a cartoon and 7 rules to explain it to children* (the original title in Italian is *Coronavirus: un fumetto e 7 regole per spiegarlo ai bambini*). In the cartoon a young doctor simply illustrates 7 basic rules that each child (but not only) should follow, but the interesting thing is that, according to the caption that accompanies the video, the information campaign was born because "In the incredible flow of news that arrives on the epidemic, to which they are inevitably exposed even to the youngest, there is the risk that they are overwhelmed by fear and fail to direct their attention to the few important news for them, also

to help prevent the spread of the virus and contagion"¹. With a still different strategy has moved the San Raffaele Hospital in Milan, that in the cartoon *Leo and Giulia, we like you!* (original title: *Leo e Giulia, noi come voi!*), designed specifically to explain the COVID-19 to children, focused on the effectiveness of peer communication, staging a dialogue between two brothers in which the elder (Giulia) explains to the minor (Leo) - under the careful and proud look of the mother - the main notions concerning COVID-19 and the behaviour to be taken to limit its spread. The three videos taken into consideration have many elements in common: the fact of being addressed to children, of being made as cartoons, to try to pass on to children a few simple messages to counter the spread of the pandemic through the widespread adoption of responsible behaviour, at all ages, and to have been produced to stem the media noise and disinformation on the pandemic, to which the doctors themselves contributed with the great media exposure and in some cases with the search for visibility and protagonism². Then, in all three videos, the parents are identified as the main reference point for children in their innate need to find meaning to the extraordinary situation that they have faced (lockdowns, school closures, daily death counts, hospitalizations and intensive therapies, mandatory personal protective equipment, etc.). Finally, taking into account the habits of young people, we realize that an interesting aspect to explore - through dedicated research activities - would be the impact of television series, usable on demand. From this point of view, in the younger groups, they are certainly among the most pervasive media - enjoyed by children/and in the company of family, by teenagers both individually and in the company of friends - who often represent doctors in the ward, in hospital and the relationship they establish with patients. Whether these American TV series imported in Italy (the most popular *ER*, *Grey's Anatomy*³ and *Doctor House*) or Italian (just think of the acquisition of the Italian format called *Doc-In your hands*⁴ that has been acquired and will be broadcast in the United States), are certainly interesting sources to analyze to understand how they affect the imagination of children/ and young people/ and not only with respect to the perception of the figure of the doctor but also the choice to take the road to becoming a professional health (doctor, nurse, surgeon, etc.).

¹ See the caption at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OVkrU7g6b-4>

² See the article published in the newspaper Il Giorno (Cerri 2021).

³ According to the New York Times, *Grey's Anatomy* is the second most viewed series in 2020 in America, with a total of 657 million viewing hours. For more info:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/12/business/media/most-streamed-shows-nielsen.html>

⁴ Good results for the Italian series *Doc-In your hands*:

<https://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2020/10/16/doc-nelle-tue-mani-boom-di-ascolti-per-la-serie-tv-con-luca-argentero-che-sara-trasmessa-anche-negli-usa/5968427/>