

ICMRA Communications Strategy: 2023 – 2025

As of November 2022

1. Introduction

The International Coalition of Medicines Regulatory Authorities (ICMRA) is an informal group of leaders of medicines regulatory authorities that promote international cooperation on the regulation of medicines to:

- strengthen global dialogue;
- facilitate wider exchange of reliable and comparable information;
- encourage greater leveraging of resources and work between authorities; and
- advocate for better informed risk-based allocation of authorities' resources and deeper collaboration.

The Coalition addresses current and emerging human medicine scientific, regulatory and safety issues to strengthen the quality, safety and efficacy of medicinal products globally. ICMRA also provides strategic directions for enhanced collaboration, improved communication and approaches to jointly address common challenges, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

Since 2020, priority has been given to activities related to ensuring alignment of regulatory approaches to the COVID-19 response. However, various working groups have also progressed other strategic priorities of ICMRA including antimicrobial resistance (AMR), drug shortages, innovation, pharmacovigilance, pharmaceutical quality knowledge management system (PQ KMS), regulatory convergence and reliance and alignment in the global COVID-19 regulatory response, and supply chain integrity.

Based on the ICMRA Communications Strategy 2020-2022, the ICMRA Communications Group has put considerable effort into streamlining COVID-19 communications, strengthening external stakeholder engagement activities and aligning internal communication across ICMRA members through agreed initiatives and messages. As a result, the Coalition's visibility has increased substantially and with it the public awareness of its important role in facilitating greater cooperation of international medicines authorities on shared regulatory issues and challenges.

The targeted communication strategy allowed ICMRA to reach new and critical audiences, showcase its achievements and promote the collaboration of international regulators from around the world.

2. Purpose statement

The ICMRA communications strategy for 2023-2025 aims to build on the achievements of the previous strategy (2020-2022), support the ICMRA members' delivery of the Coalition's strategic goals and tailor communication activities and products to the needs of key audiences.

The purpose of the Communications Strategy 2023-2025 is to:

- Strengthen ICMRA's reputation as a group of leading medicines regulators that aims to address global scientific, regulatory and safety challenges for the benefit of public health;
- Demonstrate the value of ICMRA to regulators globally as well as other partners/stakeholders through:
 - Regular updates on joint efforts to achieve regulatory alignment during public health crises, such as COVID-19 and mpox¹;
 - Communication on the results of ICMRA's working groups and projects;
 - Improved use of external website to provide content generated during meetings and projects that require input from technical experts and external stakeholders; and
 - Information sharing with stakeholders to address public health challenges.
- Further improve internal communication between members to avoid duplication of work and help their delivery of outcomes; and
- Support ICMRA to achieve its strategic goals and priorities.

3. ICMRA communication activities since 2020

The ICMRA Communications Group played a key role in raising awareness of ICMRA and positively shaping the public's perception of the importance of the work of regulatory authorities for global public health over the past three years.

Since 2020, the ICMRA Communications Group has focused on increasing ICMRA's visibility as a group of leaders of medicines regulatory authorities that provides strategic direction for enhanced collaboration, improved communication and approaches to jointly address global scientific, regulatory and safety challenges. The Group has successfully raised public awareness of ICMRA and its unique contributions among regulators as well as other public health stakeholders globally.

The ICMRA external website² is a key platform to provide information, enhance public awareness and strengthen transparency of ICMRA's activities. The majority of project outputs and all ICMRA statements have been published on this website, providing an avenue for ICMRA to promote its activities and exert its influence worldwide. The security of the website has been improved and better accessibility and an increased frequency of web updates about ICMRA's initiatives have contributed to significantly enhanced user engagement (the number of visits increased from about

¹ In November 2022, the World Health Organization (WHO) recommended to start using mpox as synonym for monkeypox disease after an expanded global outbreak of the disease in early 2022.

² Development of the ICMRA website has been led by the Japanese Pharmaceuticals and Medical Devices Agency (PMDA) with support from the European Medicines Agency.

3,900 in January 2020 to more than 72,000 in July 2022, the highest number since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic).

In September 2022, the ICMRA Communications Group carried out a survey to collect ICMRA members' views on the progress made on ICMRA communications since 2020³. The respondents acknowledged that the Communication Group has successfully disseminated timely, accurate and reliable information not only to international regulatory authorities but also to the general public, published many ICMRA materials in multiple languages, improved the design of the ICMRA website resulting in a higher number of visits and user engagement, increased the engagement with journalists from global media outlets that covered ICMRA's work more frequently, and streamlined the processes for the publication of ICMRA statements, and reports of regulatory workshops and other strategic meetings.

According to the respondents of the survey, the ICMRA communication activities were successful because of:

- Early planning and targeted communication campaigns organised and coordinated by the ICMRA Communications Group;
- Simple, clear and consistent messages;
- Cross-channel promotion of ICMRA materials on key regulatory issues and challenges;
- Revamping of the ICMRA website as the main ICMRA communication channel, resulting in higher numbers and engagement of online visitors;
- Improved transparency and confidence in regulatory authorities, especially during the COVID- 19 pandemic;
- Increased media engagement;
- Effective collaboration with ICMRA working groups/projects; and
- Organisation and coordination of more frequent (monthly) ICMRA Communications Group meetings during the pandemic to align communications around the Coalition's key activities and milestones related to the pandemic response.

Despite the significant achievements, the ICMRA Communications Group has also faced a number of challenges. For example, limited communication resources, increased workload and insufficient time for preparation or dissemination of communication materials were major obstacles to ICMRA communications between 2020 and 2022. The lack of internal engagement and/or buy-in from ICMRA members also limited the impact of the communication efforts. Nevertheless, the ICMRA Communications Group has delivered on its communication objectives and successfully implemented its strategy over the past three years.

³ Eight members provided their views on key communication activities and milestones reached since 2020. These include the Brazilian National Health Surveillance Agency (ANVISA), the Chinese National Medical Products Administration (NMPA), the European Medicines Agency (EMA), the Health Products and Food Branch Health Canada (HPFB-HC), the Italian Medicines Agency (AIFA), the Japanese Pharmaceuticals and Medical Devices Agency (PMDA), the Saudi Food and Drug Authority (SFDA) and the State Expert Centre of the Ministry of Health (SECMOH) of Ukraine.

4. Communication goals

The overarching ambition of ICMRA communications is to help build and safeguard the Coalition's reputation, demonstrate the positive impact of its work on high-priority public health topics and promote its value to regulators globally.

This strategy is focused on five key goals:

- Strengthening ICMRA's identity and visibility as group of leading medicines regulators that provides pro-active strategic leadership through the promotion of regulatory convergence, collaboration, information sharing and development of joint approaches;
- Supporting ICMRA to deal effectively with public health threats, such as COVID-19 and mpox, by providing timely, reliable and targeted information to external and internal stakeholders;
- Widening dissemination of the joint statements developed by ICMRA and working groups via ICMRA's website and other channels to show value of international reliance, collaboration and crisis management, support capacity building and increase impact;
- Enhancing cohesion of ICMRA by raising awareness of the Coalition's initiatives among employees and experts of ICMRA member agencies;
- Promoting ICMRA's unique contributions and facilitate dialogue and collaboration with other established international initiatives, in particular during crises, such as global pandemics.

5. Target audiences

ICMRA aims to be recognised as providing strategic direction, advocacy and leadership to the global medicines regulatory community, enabling key regulatory challenges to be addressed. To do this, ICMRA needs to continue to raise its profile amongst its target audiences, giving visibility to its activities and demonstrating how it adds value.

ICMRA shares information about its work with specialised audiences, including:

- International collaborative bodies, including those bringing together both medicines regulators and pharmaceutical industry, such as ICH, IPRP, PIC/S;
- Medicines regulatory authorities around the globe;
- Policy-makers;
- Pharmaceutical industry for innovators, advance therapy ATMPs (regenerative medicines) and generics, small molecules as well as biologics;
- Public health officials, including healthcare professionals;
- Global non-government organisations (NGOs); and
- Major academic and philanthropic organisations with an interest in medicines regulation.

Patients and healthcare professionals are at the heart of medicines regulatory authorities' work as they are the individuals who ultimately benefit from it. Members of the general public are considered as secondary target audiences for ICMRA because they are usually reached via public health authorities at national level.

It is also important that the staff of ICMRA member organisations are kept informed of the main messages and deliverables concerning ICMRA's initiatives so that they are equipped to deal with questions or comments from their stakeholders. Therefore, employees and experts of ICMRA member agencies should also be considered as key target audiences when developing new communication materials.

It is envisaged that communications to national level associations or stakeholders will continue to be undertaken by the relevant national regulatory agencies.

6. Communication channels

To reach the above-mentioned audiences, ICMRA produces various communication tools (such as joint statements, reflection papers, reports and infosheets/leaflets) and disseminates its key messages via established channels, including:

- ICMRA website and regulatory authorities' websites;
- Targeted mailings/letters;
- Virtual discussions, workshops and webinars;
- International events and (face-to-face) meetings;
- Journal articles;
- Media articles;
- Ambassadors/champions; and
- Social media.

ICMRA also encourages partners and key stakeholders to share information on its activities via their own communication channels if possible.

In 2023, ICMRA will celebrate its 10th anniversary. This will be used as a major opportunity to increase awareness of ICMRA and its work globally.

7. Evaluation and review

Robust planning and evaluation are critical to track progress and assess the impact of ICMRA communications, learn from experiences and adapt communication activities accordingly. Particularly in a communication environment with limited resources, strategic planning and evaluation will ensure that activities deliver value and help the Coalition to achieve its goals.

The performance and impact of ICMRA communications from 2023 to 2025 will be measured by using various metrics, such as:

- Stakeholder monitoring as measured by correspondence and inquiries received, requests for participation in panels or in discussions, etc.;
- Media coverage, media monitoring, requests for interviews;
- Other feedback or responses received from the public or other stakeholders;
- Social media and web analytics;
- Reach of targeted mailings; and
- Internal stakeholder engagement.

The ICMRA Communications Group will monitor the progress on the implementation of this strategy and the key deliverables and adapt as needed.