

# Call for Papers

## Risk, Perception, and Response Conference

### Harvard Center for Risk Analysis

The deadline for submissions has now passed. The following is provided for information only.

#### Overview:

How people react to scientific evidence of risk is mediated by many factors, including how risk information is perceived and communicated, how we react to social and cultural influences, and how choices are structured. Examples abound of situations where individuals' risk perceptions lead them to act in ways that appear contrary to their own interests, overreacting to or neglecting risks. How can situations in which individuals are likely to respond poorly be identified, and what can be done to improve their responses? To increase our understanding of the factors that contribute to these behaviors and to develop better options for fostering sound decisions, the Harvard Center for Risk Analysis is commissioning papers for presentation at a March 20-21, 2014 conference and subsequent publication.

#### Description:

Limited attention, emotional reactions, and difficulties in processing risk-related information, among other factors, may lead individuals to act in ways that impair their health or welfare. For example, warnings about mercury in fish can lead people to decrease their overall fish consumption and hence their consumption of healthful omega-3 fatty acids. Concerns about autism can lead to vaccine avoidance, increasing the individual's risk of disease and the risk of transmission to others. Such behaviors may result from incomplete, inaccurate, or ineffective risk communication, or may occur even if the risk is well-communicated. Choice architecture, popularized by Thaler and Sunstein's *Nudge*, also affects behavior. To promote welfare-enhancing decisions, better understanding of these causal factors is needed, together with innovative approaches for overcoming them.

#### Call for Papers:

The Harvard Center for Risk Analysis is soliciting papers to explore these issues and develop methods for effectively addressing them. Papers may be theoretically or empirically oriented; case studies are encouraged but not required. Examples of topics that may be addressed include the following.

1. How can we identify and assess cases where reactions to risk have led, or are likely to lead, to harmful behaviors, from an *ex post* or *ex ante* perspective?

2. What factors affect the likelihood and severity of these adverse outcomes? To what extent are they attributable to the nature of the risk, the characteristics of the affected population, cognitive or affective responses, social or cultural considerations, or other factors?
3. How can we intervene to prevent such adverse reactions? What are the implications for risk communication, choice architecture, government policies, or other actions?

For each accepted paper, HCRA will cover travel expenses (including airfare, hotel, and other expenses) of up to \$1,000 for one presenter. In addition, we will pay a \$3,000 honorarium. The first \$1,000 will be provided upon receipt of a complete draft of the paper, due no later than January 31, 2014. The remaining \$2,000 will be provided when the final manuscript is submitted for publication. Authors will have the option of submitting their paper for peer-reviewed publication as part of a special series focused on the results of the conference.

**Submissions must be provided as PDFs, and must include the following information:**

- 1) Title (70 characters maximum).
- 2) Complete list of authors and institutional affiliations.
- 3) Full contact information for the presenter (email, postal address, and phone number). All correspondence will be directed to this individual.
- 4) A statement certifying that the research represents new work that will not be submitted for publication prior to the conference.
- 5) A summary of the proposed research, no longer than 1,000 words, that clearly:
  - a) indicates the relationship of the research to the goals and objectives of this project; and,
  - b) describes the issues to be addressed by the research and how it will be conducted.
- 6) A bibliography including no more than 15 references.

Submissions that do not adhere to these requirements will not be considered.

Submissions must be emailed to [riskperception@hsph.harvard.edu](mailto:riskperception@hsph.harvard.edu) and received no later than **June 10, 2013**.

Completed papers must be submitted to the conference organizers no later than **January 31, 2014**.

**SUBMISSION OF AN ABSTRACT IS VIEWED AS A COMMITMENT TO COMPLETE THE WORK, ADHERE TO THE SCHEDULE NOTED ABOVE, AND ATTEND THE CONFERENCE IF SELECTED.**

**Decisions will be provided no later than September 10, 2013.**