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### **Original:**

<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13669877.2015.1100659>

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*Gesser-Edelsburga A, Shir-Razb Y. Journal of Risk Research, 2015.*

This study focuses on newspaper coverage of the Hickox quarantine incident, using it as a case study to examine how the media characterized the spread of disease in an ongoing crisis situation characterized by uncertainty. The study builds on Slovic et al.'s research, who argue that risk perception is comprised of both emotional and analytical aspects. We employed a qualitative approach, first examining articles on Hickox's story in *The New York Times* and *New York Daily News* between October 25 and 31, 2014; and second, readers' comments in response to these articles. The findings from the newspaper articles show that in their treatment of the quarantine debate, the media did not address the issue of uncertainty, and thus continued the health authorities' neglect of this issue. Although the media gave expression to various sides of the debate, it emphasized those who objected to the quarantine policy, thus raising the claim that

the conflict was between 'science' and the public's 'irrational fears,' and that the governors decided on quarantine in response to the public's panic and fears. From our analysis of readers' comments, it appears that these claims are unjustified. First, we found that the public did not speak in a single unified voice, but rather, was divided into supporters and opponents of quarantine. Both sides used scientific arguments and resorted to similar terminology, and tended to cite and present studies backing their arguments. As for irrational fears, although quarantine supporters expressed emotions, they indicated mainly concerns, not panic or hysteria.

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**ASSET**

**Action plan on Science in Society related issues in Epidemics and Total pandemics  
European Commission**

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**Source URL:** <https://www.asset-scienceinsociety.eu/resources/scientific-literature/science-vs-fear-ebola-quarantine-debate-case-study-reveals-how>

**Links**

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