Background

- There is a recent increase in peer-reviewed literature on climate change impacts on human health.  
- The variability of health impacts is dependent on geographic location, socio-economic status, and overall health of the population. 2,3,4,5 
- Recent newspaper literature reviews on climate change have highlighted unbalanced reporting as a common trend in reporting, 2 however the reporting of climate change impacts on health has not been investigated. 
- An investigation of framing techniques by Ford and King in 2015 used in newspapers revealed a mitigation focus as opposed to an adaptation focus in the discussion of climate change. 6

Goals and Objectives

The goal of this paper was to address the research gap in how the media adapts to climate change. The specific objectives were to:
1. Quantitatively and qualitatively analyze trends in Canadian newspaper reporting of climate impacts on health from 2005-2014;
2. Characterize framing techniques and changes over time; and
3. Define differences in reporting across groups, demographics, and regions.

Materials and Methods

- A search strategy was developed and a 2-reviewer, 3-stage screening process including title only, abstract only, and full article screening was used.
- The search string used was: “climate change” OR “global warming” OR “climate variability” AND (infectious OR communicable OR contagious OR Illness OR sickness OR vector or health OR “mental health”) and was completed in the ProQuest database.

Analysis

Developed codes through memoing, pretesting, and reflecting on the recurrent themes and applied them to articles to draw qualitative themes from the literature.

Conducted the screening process with Dedoose SR, organized quantitative analysis with Excel version 14.1.4, and conducted the qualitative analysis with Dedoose version 3.1.1.

Key Points

- This review analyzed how newspapers report on climate change impacts on health that may inform the perceptions of the North American population.
- A positive correlation was identified between the frequencies of reporting of climate change impacts on health with the occurrence of climate change related events.
- Framing around climate change impacts on health revealed reporting that had a general negative valence.

Preliminary Results

- The frequency of articles about climate change impacts on health dramatically decreased from 2005 – 2014. (Fig. 1)
- The frequency of newspaper article publication had a positive correlation with climate change related events. (Fig. 1)
- Climate change was generally reported with negative valence. (Fig. 2)
- Key themes in the newspaper articles included: valence, conflict, quotes, urgency, and political willpower. (Table 1, Fig. 3)

Discussion

- This paper addressed the gap in newspaper reviews of climate change impacts on health in North America by providing information on themes and trends within the newspaper article reporting.
- This demonstrates the need for climate change and health researchers to actively disseminate to various media outlets to ensure the general public is receiving accurate information about climate change impacts on health.
- Limitations: only English newspapers and only looking at climate change impacts on health in North America.
- Canada has two official languages and not including French articles excludes most newspaper articles published in Quebec

Analyzing newspapers only in North America eliminates a global perspective, which leaves a gap for future grey literature research on a global scale.

Conclusion

- Articles generally reported health impacts with a negative valence.
- Climate change and health reporting decreased over time.
- Reporting generally coincides with extreme weather events, and climate change reports or conferences.

Next Steps

- Investigate other media sources and compare the framing techniques used to influence the perceptions of the general public.
- Investigate the perceptions of climate change impacts on health outside of North America.

References


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Table 1. Codes and Frequency of Application

| Conflict Codes (eg. humans vs. environment, humans vs. climate change) | 412 |
| Quotes (eg. scientific researchers, politicians) | 495 |
| Valence Codes (eg. Positive, negative, neutral, or uncertain) | 615 |
| Urgency Codes (eg. Strong, weak, or neutral) | 197 |
| Political Willpower Codes (eg. Strong, weak, or neutral) | 128 |

Figure 1. Number of publications per newspaper per year.

Figure 2. Changes in valence reporting from 2005-2014

Figure 3. Major themes and excerpts from the articles.