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Food bloggers and risk communication: impact of a community-centered training activity aimed at the online dissemination of correct food preparation practices in the household.

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The main health and food agencies in Europe (EFSA, 2013; ECDC, 2013) consider food risks as one of the major threats to consumer health. The awareness among consumers regarding the microbiological, chemical and nutritional hazards is still limited. European and Italian studies have highlighted consumers' concern regarding chemical risks (EU, 2010); the phenomenon of food toxoinfections, instead, seems to be underestimated by consumers, even though about half of food poisoning epidemics originates in the household environment (ISTISAN, 2006). Moreover European consumers do not seem to be particularly interested in nutritional aspects such as controlling calories or nutrients in the food they eat (EU, 2010).

Today the internet is considered as an important source of information also for health issues (Kummervold et al., 2008). The blog has become a widespread means for the exchange of online information (Kennedy, 2004), where topics regarding food and nutrition feature with increasing prominence. The bloggers pass on practical information about food preparation and crucial phases for food safety (preservation, handling and cooking of food). As part of risk communication, therefore, food blogs seem to be a relevant case study because they have the ability to reach user networks in a rapid and capillary manner.

The project is aimed at conducting an experimental study through the combined use of methods for risk communication and online training. The goal of the project is to create a system for the dissemination of correct cooking practices through the food blog network, targeted to consumers who surf the internet (followers). The information will be disseminated thanks to the direct involvement of food bloggers with a view to overcoming the traditional linear communication model (top-down), and to experiment with a new participatory model.