Communication strategies with diverse populations

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Communication Strategies with Diverse Populations:
Presentation to the Necessary Elements Workshop
Siteman Cancer Center
January 30, 2007

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Objectives

• Establish argument for factors contributing to cancer disparities for which communication is an appropriate response
• Present general principles of effective health communication theory and practice
• Present cutting edge research in communication to eliminate cancer disparities
Pink book guidelines

• Communication can:
  – Increase knowledge and awareness of problems
  – Influence and reinforce perceptions, beliefs, attitudes, norms
  – Prompt action
  – Increase demand for services

• Communication can not:
  – Compensate for inadequate or inaccessible services
  – Produce sustained change in absence of parallel changes in services, technology and policy

(Making health communication programs work, 2nd ed., NCI, 2002)
Causes of cancer disparities

• Health disparities occur when one group of people has a higher incidence or mortality rate than another, or when survival rates are less for one group than another.

• Disparities can involve groups characterized by gender, age, ethnicity, education, income, social class, disability, geographic location, or sexual orientation.

(http://crchd.ncei.nih.gov/chd/disparities_examples.html)
Causes of cancer disparities

- Socioeconomic status (SES) appears to play a major role in differences in cancer incidence and mortality rates, risk factors, and screening practices among ethnic and minority groups.
- But ethnic minorities tend to receive lower quality health care than whites do, even when insurance status, income, age, and severity of conditions are comparable.

(IOM, Unequal treatment, 2002)
Causes of cancer disparities

- Systems barriers (e.g. insurance)
- Financial barriers (e.g. costs of care)
- Physical barriers (e.g. living in rural areas)
- Clinician/client communication
- Barriers related to information or education
- Barriers related to culture and biases

(http://crchd.nci.nih.gov/chd/barriers.html)
Communication gaps

- Clinician/client miscommunication
  - More minorities than whites report difficulty communicating with doctors

- Unavailable health information
  - Greater inability to find or assess available information, and inability to respond to available information, among minorities than whites

- Culturally inappropriate health information
  - Failure to match health information to audience language, cultural characteristics or educational levels

(http://crchd.nci.nih.gov/chd/disparities_examples.html)
Communication fundamentals

• Audience-focused
  – Ethical and effective health communication programs rely on information from and about the intended audience to inform development, planning, implementation and evaluation
  – Public health communication uses formative research and feedback to ensure that messages are accessible and comprehensible, that communities are involved, and programs are modified as needed

(Bernhardt, 2004)
Communication fundamentals

• Theory-based
  – Effective health communication programs are informed by communication and social behavioral theories and the relevant evidence-base
  – Theory increases effectiveness of programs by identifying critical beliefs to target, by structuring communication, and by guiding the selection of sources and channels of communication

Communication fundamentals

• Behavior matters
  – Behavioral theory and research shows that behavioral specification matters when it comes to assessing and seeking to influence pertinent behavioral, normative, and control beliefs
  – Effective communication programs have focused and specific behavioral objectives, and actionable messages

(Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975)
Communication fundamentals

• Exposure matters
  – Communication effects require sufficient exposure, in terms of reach and frequency, to the messages by the intended audience
  – Programs with greater reach (proportion of an intended audience exposed to messages) have greater chance of success
  – A meta-analysis of communication campaigns found a correlation of .47 between reach and effect size (Hamilton and Snyder, 2002)
  – Programs with greater message frequency (number of exposures by audience members), and multiplicity of sources have greater chance of success
Communication fundamentals

• Messages matter
  – Structure, content and language of messages influence potential persuasiveness; a few examples:
  – Explicit conclusions (actions) are persuasive
  – Two-sided messages that refute arguments are more persuasive than one-sided messages
  – Evidence produces more stable change than no evidence
  – Fear appeals work provided action message is clear

(Perloff, 2003)
Communication fundamentals

• Sources matter
  – Sources can be individual spokespeople or institutions
  – Authority, credibility and attractiveness of sources can enhance program effectiveness

(Perloff, 2003)
Communication fundamentals

• Program effects
  – Health communication programs can achieve success through direct effects of exposure
  – Programs can also change beliefs and behaviors indirectly, via social or institutional diffusion

(Hornik, 2002)
Communication fundamentals

• Conflicting imperatives in programs and research
  – Controlled trials require controlling exposure to messages in the comparison communities, effectively diminishing exposure levels in intervention communities too
  – Communication theory tells us to maximize exposure to achieve effects

(Hornik, 2002)
Explanations for success with high exposure levels

• Improved simple learning
• Message available when user ready
• Implicit communication of social expectations
• Increased social discussion
• Increased policy attention and institutional change

(Hornik, 1997)
NCI-funded Centers of Excellence in Cancer Communication Research

Saint Louis University’s Center for Cultural Cancer Communication aims to use communication to eliminate cancer disparities
Prostate cancer needs assessment

• A needs assessment conducted in the African American community in St. Louis suggests the following important strategic elements to enhance prostate cancer care:
  – Consistent messages
  – Survivor leadership
  – Media outreach
  – Institutional mobilization
Storytelling Project:
An innovative and interdisciplinary approach to breast cancer communication for African American women
Increasing effectiveness of breast cancer information

1. Maximize MESSAGE effects
   – Frame cancer information in terms of community-specific impact and socio-cultural values

2. Maximize SOURCE effects
   – Use messengers similar in background and values and with experience-based knowledge about cancer
Ozioma (Black Newspaper Study)

• Because Black newspapers are an important and trusted source of information in the Black community, they hold great potential to convey cancer information

• Purpose: test the potential of providing community-tailored press releases to increase the coverage of cancer information in Black papers

• Study design: RCT, with twelve matched communities
Early results

• In the first year of the study:
  – 24 releases sent
  – 9 newspapers used the releases
  – 69 total stories printed
  – 249,000 potential newspaper readers reached
Elimika

• Purpose: Compare different approaches to cultural appropriateness:
  – Evidential approaches provide data specific to the intended audience
  – Peripheral approaches use colors, pictures, or titles that appeal to the group
  – Sociocultural approaches address health in the context of social and cultural characteristics of the group
True Colors Image Library
“Soul Sister”
stock photo CD
from
punchstock.com
130 images =
$599.00