Communication strategies with diverse populations

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Communication Strategies with Diverse Populations: Presentation to the Necessary Elements Workshop
Siteman Cancer Center
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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.nei.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.

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