Developing community-level social marketing messages to raise awareness of asthma in older Australians: Preliminary results

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Background

• While asthma awareness campaigns are generally aimed at children and their parents, asthma affects a similar proportion of older adults, often with more severe health consequences.
• A targeted asthma awareness campaign utilising social marketing techniques could improve the health outcomes and quality of life of this population.
Background

• We developed a survey for the community about asthma and health in general, addressing:
  • Asthma-related health beliefs
  • Asthma knowledge
  • Health-related quality of life
  • Use of and perceived reliability of various health information sources

Research Objective

• We pilot tested our survey in the older adult population to learn more about their asthma perceptions to guide development of a targeted social marketing campaign.
Method

- One-hundred and fifteen adults aged 55 years and over completed a self-report survey about their asthma knowledge, beliefs and perceptions.

Results at a Glance

- Asthma Knowledge
  - The majority (89.8%) knew that you could get asthma as an adult without having it as a child
  - Poor knowledge of asthma signs, with many answering incorrectly to the signs “shortness of breath” (32.3%), “tightness in the chest” (39%), and “cough at night” (50%)
Results at a Glance

- Use of health information sources
  - The main source was GP/Doctors (93.2%), followed by Friends/Relatives (63.5%) and Pharmacists (59.2%)
  - Between 41%-47% of the sample reported never using the Internet, newspapers, magazines, television or radio to access health information

- Reliability/credibility of sources
  - Only information from GP/Doctors and Pharmacists were perceived as being mostly to completely reliable

Results at a Glance

- The majority (64.5%) did not think that they were susceptible to developing asthma.
- Almost all respondents (96.5%) thought that asthma was serious.
- 15.7% of the sample were diagnosed asthmatics
- The audience was segmented into four groups based on their perceptions of asthma susceptibility and seriousness.
Audience Segmentation

Segmentation by Asthma Beliefs

- **Affected Asthmatics**: 19%
- **Unaffected Asthmatics**: 36%
- **Serious for Me**: 25%
- **Serious for Others**: 64%

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<th>SEGMENT</th>
<th>Perceived Susceptibility</th>
<th>Perceived Seriousness</th>
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<tr>
<td>Serious for Me</td>
<td>High</td>
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<td>Has Asthma</td>
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Key messages for “Serious for Others”
- Publicise prevalence of asthma in older adults (10%) and risk factors
- Respiratory symptoms of asthma can be treated and are not a normal part of ageing

“Asthma is serious for others”
Asthma is potentially serious for me

Key messages for “Serious for Me”
- Raising awareness of the primary asthma symptoms
- Encourage a visit to their doctor upon experiencing the main symptoms of asthma

“I have asthma and I think it is serious”

Key messages for “Affected Asthmatics”
- Ways to properly self-manage asthma
- Promote behaviours beneficial to good respiratory health e.g. exercise
Segmentation & Messages

Key messages for “Unaffected Asthmatics”
• The consequences of not properly managing their asthma
• Incorporating healthy respiratory behaviours into their daily activities

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Campaign Implications

• The campaign will...
  – Create targeted messages based on the audience’s perceptions of asthma
  – Address gaps in asthma knowledge
  – Utilise health information sources that are both used and deemed to be credible
Next Phase

• This segmentation has been replicated in a larger data set (n = 4,066) from our recent mail-out baseline survey
• Currently designing campaign materials
• Then will pre-test these materials and developed messages with our target audience

Questions?

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