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## Consumer Awareness, Understanding, and Perceptions of Recalls of FDA- Regulated Products

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## Literature Review

- **Question:**
  - What do we know about the public's awareness, understanding, and perceptions of recalls concerning FDA-regulated products?
- **Date of review:** December, 2007 – February, 2008
- **Search Techniques:**
  - **Databases**—Web of Knowledge, Science Direct, PubMed, Scopus
  - **Colleagues** -- Nancy Ostrove, Alan Levy, Michael Wogalter



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## Literature Review cont.

- **Search terms –**
  - “FDA recalls” and “Consumer reaction”
  - “FDA recalls” and “Consumer”
  - “Consumer” and “FDA recall”
  - “Consumer” and “FDA press release”
  - “Communication” and “FDA” and “Recalls”
  - “FDA recalls” and “Press”
  - “Consumer understanding of FDA recalls”



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## Literature review cont.

- **Search terms --**
  - “Food recalls” and “Consumers”
  - “Food recalls” and “Media”
  - “Food recall” and “Press”
  - “Drug recall” and “Consumer”
  - “Drug recall” and “Press”
  - “Drug recall” and “Media”



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## Results

- **Few articles specific to consumer understanding of FDA recalls**
  - Most relevant articles related to foodborne illness outbreaks
- **Large body of work related to recall and safety warning label effectiveness of consumer products–**
  - **Recall Effectiveness Research: A Review and Summary of the Literature on Consumer Motivation and Behavior, July 2003**



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## Framework

1. **Initial receipt and recognition of a safety-related message**
2. **Message reading and comprehension**
3. **Storage and recollection of instructions for compliance**
4. **Evaluation of benefits and costs of compliance**
5. **Actual compliance with the message**

– Source: Recall Effectiveness Research: A Review and Summary of the Literature on Consumer Motivation and Behavior, Prepared for the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission by XL Associates and Heiden Associates, July 2003



## **Home Delivered Ice Cream -1994**

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- Recall notification – press release, media, personal letter, delivery person, friends and family
- Consumer survey results indicate the recall message was not very effective
  - Most heard of problem but many still thought safe to eat
- Some reasons why
  - News reports not specific
  - Many did not recall receiving the warning letter



## **Hot Dogs and Deli Meats -1998**

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- National recall – product in 22 states
- Consumer survey as part of CDC's FoodNet survey
- Half of those surveyed had not heard of the recall
- 25% who heard of recall did not know that product was unsafe to eat
- Most heard of recall via television



## **E. Coli in Spinach - 2006**

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- Results of a national consumer survey
- Most (87%) aware of spinach recall
- Most (71%) learned of recall from TV
- Most (98%) knew that bagged fresh spinach was recalled, but consumers less sure of other types of spinach
- Many ate fresh spinach after hearing of recall
- Spill over effect to other bagged produce



## **Barriers to FDA Food Recall Effectiveness**

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- Difficult to convince consumers not to use a product that appears to be in good condition
  - Press releases and media should emphasize that the product is unsafe to eat
- Can be difficult to identify a specific product involved in a recall (meat codes, sell by dates, lot numbers)
  - Varying motivation to search for a recalled product
- Expectation that recalled products have been pulled from retailer shelves



## **Recall Considerations**

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- Different recall approaches for different FDA products (prescription drugs, vaccines, devices)?
- Consumers of different FDA products may prefer to be contacted differently
  - Manufacturers
  - Health care providers
  - Media



## **Conclusions**

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- Broad literature on recall effectiveness and warning labels
- Scant data on consumer response to FDA recalls
- Articles cited – end of presentation



## Articles Cited

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- Recall Effectiveness Research: A Review and Summary of the Literature on Consumer Motivation and Behavior, Prepared for the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission by XL Associates and Heiden Associates, July 2003.  
[www.cpsc.gov/LIBRARY/FOIA/FOIA03/os/RecallEffectiveness.pdf](http://www.cpsc.gov/LIBRARY/FOIA/FOIA03/os/RecallEffectiveness.pdf)
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- Findings from Six Focus Group on Medical Device Safety Communications. Food and Drug Administration, Center for Devices and Radiological Health. Prepared by Edge Research, 2006.

