Persuasive Communication: Issues, Evidence and Ideas

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Does communication change behavior?

What are the barriers?

How can the FDA improve communication?
Impact of Mass Communication on Behavior Change

- Modest, positive impacts
- Less effective among vulnerable groups
- Less effective for complex issues
- More effective with multiple channels
- Little information re: FDA communication
Traditional Model of Health Communication

Scientific Findings → Expert Rational, Generic Messages delivered to the public

Knowledge → Action → Evaluate(?)

- Health Belief Model
- Theory of Reasoned Action, etc.
The Persuasion Challenge

“Socialize” Information to be deeply relevant & influential
Context: Social-Ecological Model
What is Health Literacy?

The ability to access, read, understand and act on health information.
National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL) 2003
NAAL Findings 2003

- 30 million (14%: Below Basic)
- 63 million (29%: Basic)
- 95 million (44%: Intermediate)
- 28 million (13%: Proficient)
# Healthy Literacy Skills by Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Task Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Below Basic</td>
<td>Circle the date of a medical appointment on a hospital appointment slip.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Basic</td>
<td>Give 2 reasons a person should be tested for a specific disease, based on information in a clearly written pamphlet.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>Determine what time a person can take a prescription medication, based on information on the drug label that relates the timing of medication to eating.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Proficient</td>
<td>Calculate an employee’s share of health insurance costs for a year, using a table.</td>
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What is it like?

GNINAELC – Ot erussa hghihecnamrofrep, yllacidoirep naelc eht epat sdaeh dna natspac revenehw uoy eciton na noitalumucca fo tsud dna nworb-red edixo selcitrap. Esu a nottoc baws denetsiom htiw lyporposi lohocla.
• The average American reads at the 7th-8th grade level

• 20% read below the 5th grade level

• Most health information is written at the 10-12th grade level.
Risk Communication Issues:

• Hard to understand, changeable
• Often requires quantitative skills
• Requires trusted, 2-way communication
• Emotions may overrule science in decisions
• Perceptions may vary by culture, education
In High Concern Situations, People Want to Know That You Care Before They Care What You Know

Assessed in first 9-30 seconds

Listening/Caring/Empathy 50%
Persuasive Risk Communication Messages

- Communicate threats clearly and strongly
- Recommend a few specific, practical actions
Tips to Improve Communication

CO-DESIGN WITH THE TARGET AUDIENCES

- Use photos and stories
- Acknowledge emotions
- Write information at appropriate user level
- Put info in small “chunks”
- Focus on behavior rather than facts
- Make information culturally sensitive
Designing Better Communication

1. Define communication objectives and audiences,
2. Assess audiences’ knowledge, attitudes, behaviors (surveys, focus groups, etc.)
3. Set up a PARTICIPATORY DESIGN process with audiences (groups and individuals)
4. Iteratively develop and test communication
5. Engage audiences & stakeholders to plan delivery
6. Evaluate impact and revise
7. Adapt for other language and cultural groups
Recommendations #1: Assess Risk Communication

Assess current risk communication among diverse groups:

- Reading levels, Internet navigation, linguistic & cultural relevance
- Impacts on users’ knowledge
- Impacts on users’ attitudes and confidence
- Impacts on users’ actions
Recommendation #2: Build Communication Capacity

• Identify internal expertise and gaps; add staff
• Identify, train and publicize FDA spokesperson
• Convene a strategic planning meeting to set a communication research and action agenda
• Form partnerships with other federal, state and professional organizations
• Seek federal funding and other resources
Recommendation #3: Improve Communication

• Set standards:
  Readability - 6th grade
  Website meets DHHS usability guidelines
  Linguistic and cultural relevance
  Accessibility for people with disabilities

• DESIGN & TEST WITH DIVERSE GROUPS!
Recommendation #3 (cont.): Improve Communication

• Develop new delivery channels:
  Public Information Officers
  News media, including ethnic media
  Grocer’s Associations

• Research communication impacts
Social-ecological model:

Health communication and behavior:


References (page 2)

Health literacy:


Internet communication impacts and design recommendations:


Risk Communication:
