HEALTH COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGIES AND AFRICAN AMERICAN POPULATIONS: THE CASE OF HEART DISEASE

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Outline

1. Definitions
2. History
3. Complexity of health communications
4. Strategic communication planning steps
5. Characteristics of effective health communication strategies
6. Health literacy
Definitions

- **Health Communication** – The study and use of communication strategies to inform and influence individual and community decisions that enhance health (NCI/CDC, 2010).

- **Public Health Communication** - “The art and techniques of informing, influencing, and motivating individual, institutional, and public audiences about important health issues.” (HP2010)
ICA established the Therapeutic Communication Interest Group in 1972 – this later became the Health Communication Division
NCA formed the Commission for Health Communication in 1985 – later became the Health Communication Division
Nature of Health Communication Inquiry

Health Communication

Social-Scientific Scholarship
- Communication, Psychology, Sociology, Anthropology

Theories from Humanities
- Rhetoric, Philosophy, Art, Ethics, Theater, Literature

Applied Principles from Professional Fields
- Education, Management, Law, Marketing
Complexity of Health Communication Inquiry

- Extremely broad research area – occurs at many different levels.
Complexity of Health Communication Inquiry

- Primary levels of health communication:
  + Intrapersonal – internal mental states and psychological processes that influence health care
  + Interpersonal – relational influences on health outcomes
  + Group – interdependent group members in health care teams, support groups
  + Organizational – coordinate interdependent groups, mobilize different specialists
  + Societal – generation, dissemination and utilization of relevant health information through diverse media to broad audiences to promote health education and promotion
ALL STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION PLANNING INVOLVES SOME VARIATION ON THESE STEPS:

1. Identify the health problem and determine whether communication should be part of the intervention

2. Identify the audience for the communication program and determine the best ways to reach them

3. Develop and test communication concepts, messages, and materials with representatives of the target audiences

4. Implement the health communication program based on results of the testing

5. Assess how effectively the messages reached the target audience and modify the communication program if necessary
CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE HEALTH COMMUNICATION
Accuracy

- Valid content without factual, interpretation or judgment errors.
What is heart disease?

- The term "heart disease" refers to several types of heart conditions.
- The most common type in the United States is coronary artery disease, which can cause heart attack, angina, heart failure, and arrhythmias.
What are the major symptoms of heart disease?

The five major symptoms of a heart episode are:

- Uncomfortable pressure, squeezing, fullness, or pain in the center of the chest that lasts more than a few minutes or goes away and comes back.
What are the major symptoms of heart disease?

The five major symptoms of a heart episode are:

- Pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw or stomach.
What are the major symptoms of heart disease?

The five major symptoms of a heart episode are:

- Shortness of breath with or without chest discomfort.
What are the major symptoms of heart disease?

The five major symptoms of a heart episode are:
- Other signs such as breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea or lightheadedness/faintness/wooziness.
What are the major symptoms of heart disease?

The five major symptoms of a heart episode are:

- Nausea or vomiting, heartburn, loss of appetite, tiredness, coughing, heart flutters (women)
What are the major symptoms of heart disease?

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- Uncomfortable pressure, squeezing, fullness, or pain in the center of the chest that lasts more than a few minutes or goes away and comes back.
- Pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw or stomach.
- Shortness of breath with or without chest discomfort.
- Other signs such as breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea or lightheadedness/faintness/wooziness.
- Nausea or vomiting, heartburn, loss of appetite, tiredness, coughing, heart flutters (women)
WHAT TO DO IF SYMPTOMS OCCUR:

- If you think someone may be having a heart attack, call 911 immediately.

- Accompany someone or get someone to go with to the hospital.
WHAT TO DO AT EMERGENCY ROOM:

- Ask about aspirin therapy
- Ask about beta blockers

Are these the most up-to-date facts from the most reliable source?
Sources

- Federal, state and local health agencies and departments.
- Voluntary agencies (American Heart Association)
- Community based organizations

But also...
Sources

Experts cannot compete with:

- Your Opinion Leaders
  - Your Auntie, Grammy, neighbor, community gatekeepers
  - Knowing family history makes health leaders
Availability

- Message is tailored per audience
  + Placement
  + Complexity
  + Purpose
Availability

- Message is tailored per audience
  - Placement – what outlet?
  - Complexity – determine level necessary?
  - Purpose – To increase compliance to treatment? To promote prevention? To increase screening or other service? To promote precautions?
What is appropriate placement?

- If you ask ‘the learned’
But is it appropriate for all African Americans?

Do we put all our eggs in one basket?
Primary consumers of ethnic media by racial and ethnic populations:

- 55% of Hispanic Americans
- 42% of African Americans
- 40% Arab Americans
- 25% Native Americans
- 25% Asian Americans

Reliance on mainstream media for information

- 14% Hispanic Americans
- 38% Arab Americans
- 41% Asian Americans
- 41% Native Americans
- 53% African Americans


Solution?
Percent of populations that visit ethnic websites in the home

- 45% Arab Americans
- 35% Asian Americans
- 17% African Americans
- 16% Native Americans
- 10% Hispanic Americans

% of population – Low or no use of internet

- 24% Arab Americans
- 33% Asian Americans
- 51% African Americans
- 54% Native Americans
- 76% Hispanic Americans

Segmentation of media sources for information

- Media use differs largely by age groups.
  - Internet use vastly more popular among younger, employed audiences.
  - This does not mean to exclude older folks from all technology – will accommodate them eventually.
- Resurgence of radio among younger audiences.
- Minority groups report higher radio listening.
Problem to be addressed:

African Americans do not receive the most modern interventions for heart conditions, such as: cardiac catheterization, percutaneous transluminal coronary angioplasty, and coronary artery bypass graft. Less receipt of these intervention can affect quality of life, morbidity and mortality.
Problem to be addressed: disparity in the receipt of cardiac revascularization procedures for African Americans.

Intrapersonal level: Knowledge of procedure, making decision alone -
Interpersonal level: Support of decision making +
Group: Changing cultural norms that express distaste for invasive procedures –
Organizational: Offering the procedure to all patients equally means parity in information; eliminating profiling of cardiac patients +
Societal: Ensuring the equal access to appropriate cardiac procedures +
Complexity of Communication Strategies

Intrapersonal level: Revised recommendations to include take someone to doctors. Local level health departments engaged in the media communication.

Interpersonal level: Revised recommendations to include take someone to doctors. Local health departments and national health organizations, trusted organizations engaged in media communication.

Group: Involve community groups in the delivery of heart disease information that includes widening acceptance of appropriate treatment.

Organizational: IOM conducted a national study (Unequal Treatment) that uncovered racial profiling and responsibility of health professionals. Professional organizations and accrediting bodies were involved in creating awareness of bias.

Societal: Legal responsibility of health organizations and hospitals to supervise equal provision of services and elimination of bias through policy.
Benefits and risks are presented
- Recognizes different valid perspectives
Do people listen?

- Depends on what:
  + health means to the individual.
  + changing the behavior(s) (by listening to the health message) will cost you.
  + will be gained thanks to changing behavior.

Solution?
Consistency

- Content is consistent
  - Over time
  - With information from other sources
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The biggest criticism from people about health messages is that scientists are always changing their minds.
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Solution?
Message needs to be sent and confirmed

- Confirmatory process revolves around evaluation.
- Evaluation of person to person, group, and media is important.
- Evaluation is not only at the end, it is critical in refinement and improvement of communication.
Cultural Competence

- Design, implementation and evaluation process that accounts for special issues that pertain to cultural groups, educational level and disability status.
- Culture refers to group identity aspects, not simply race and ethnicity.
- Never complete, must be ongoing.
- Bidirectional.
Evidence based

- Information in based on rigorous and comprehensive analysis that support widely promulgated practice guidelines.
Repetition

- Delivery and access is continued
- Reinforced with repeated exposure
- Available to new members of intended population.
What are the symptoms of heart disease?

- There are five (5)
If those symptoms appear:

- Call 911
Early interventions

- Aspirin therapy
- Beta blockers
Timeliness

+ Content is provided on time
  × When audience most needs information
  × When audience is most receptive to information
Reducing The Risk of Heart Disease and Stroke
A Six-Step Guide for Employers
Understandability

+ Appropriate for intended audience
  × Reading level
  × Language
  × Format
So what is the most important knowledge that African Americans should have?

Personal (intrapersonal) level
- Symptoms
- Risk factors
- What to do if symptoms appear

Interpersonal/family level
- Repetition, consistency
- Support of behavioral adjustments

Group level
- Reinforcement of interdependence via consonance
So what is the most important knowledge that African Americans should have?

Organization level
   Coordination of groups via interdependent services that support information communication

Society level
   Provide political and legal structure that allows for all levels to turn communication into practice

To receive the information through as many channels as possible.
How many parts of the heart do you think most people know?
Risk factors for African Americans

- Overweight/Obesity
- Hypertension
- High cholesterol
- Smoking
- Physical inactivity
- Poor diet
- Stress
- Diabetes
Healthy People 2010 (2020) Objectives

- Use communication strategically to improve health (superordinate goal)
Objectives:

1. Health professional – Patient interaction
2. Individual information seeking, use and exposure to health information
3. Individual adherence to treatment and control measures
4. Construction of public health messages
5. Dissemination of population and individual health risk information
6. Images of health in mass media and culture
7. Consumer education regarding health and access to public health and health care systems
8. Development of telehealth applications
Do You Know Which Critical Public Health Issue...

- Impacts nearly one in every three people living in the United States
- Can hit any population segment, regardless of age, race, education or income
- Costs the healthcare system as much as $58 billion a year
- Can’t be diagnosed by any new medical technology and is not visible to the eye

Answer: Low Health Literacy
The Issue: Low Health Literacy

- What is health literacy?
  - The ability to read, understand and act on health information
How Big Is the Problem?
More Than 90 Million People in the US Have Difficulty Reading

- Approximately 40 to 44 Million Adults in the US Are Functionally Illiterate\(^1\)
- Approximately 50 Million Are Marginally Illiterate\(^1\)

Average Reading Skills of Adults in the US Are Between the 8\(^{th}\) and 9\(^{th}\) Grade Levels\(^2\)

Sources:
\(^1\) Kirsch et al., “A First Look at the Results of the National Adult Literacy Survey” Nat’l Center for Education Statistics, 1993
Who Is at Risk for Low Health Literacy?

- Anyone in the US – regardless of age, race, education, income or social class – can be at risk for low health literacy
  - Ethnic minority groups are disproportionately affected by low health literacy
  - The majority of people with low literacy skills in the US are white, native-born Americans
  - Older patients, recent immigrants, people with chronic diseases and those with low socioeconomic status are especially vulnerable to low health literacy
Low Health Literacy Impacts a Patient’s Ability to Fully Engage in the Healthcare System

The Largest Study Conducted to Date on Health Literacy Found That...

- **33%** Were unable to read basic health care materials
- **42%** Could not comprehend directions for taking medication on an empty stomach
- **26%** Were unable to understand information on an appointment slip
- **43%** Did not understand the rights and responsibilities section of a Medicaid application
- **60%** Did not understand a standard informed consent

Implications of Low Health Literacy

- Poor Health Outcomes
- Under-utilization of preventive services
- Over-utilization of health services
- Unnecessary health care expenditures
- Limited effectiveness of treatment
- Needless patient suffering
- Higher patient dissatisfaction
- Higher provider frustration
The Patient-Provider Relationship

There is a disconnect between patient and provider: Bridging the information gap will help improve health literacy.

- 70% of physicians say they provide patients with additional resources to help them understand their medications.
- But just 41% of those patients say they have received this kind of assistance.
- 75% of physicians report patients have trouble understanding Rx information.
- 17% of patients report trouble understanding Rx information.

Source: Health Literacy & The Prescription Drug Experience: The Front Line Perspective From Patients, Physicians and Pharmacists, Roper ASW, May 2002
What You Need to Know About Low Blood Sugar

Treat low blood sugar quickly. If you have signs of low blood sugar, eat or drink something that has sugar in it. Some things you can eat are hard candy, sugar-sweetened soda, orange juice, or a glass of milk. Special tablets or gel made of glucose (a form of sugar) can be used to treat low blood sugar. You can buy these in a drug store. Always have some of these items handy at home or with you when you go out in case your blood sugar drops too low. After treating a low blood sugar reaction, eat a small snack like half a sandwich, a glass of milk, or some crackers if your next meal is more than 30 minutes away.

Source: The National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases
Example of Clear Health Communication – That Reaches a Broad Consumer Audience

- Common visual used to explain concept
- Uses action captions that clarify the point of the visual
- Creates interaction with the reader
Verbal Communication

Up to 80% of Patients Forget What Their Doctor Tells Them As Soon As They Leave the Doctor’s Office – AND

Nearly 50% of What They Do Remember is Recalled Incorrectly

Patients experience shame around the issue

- Only 14% of patients say they feel awkward admitting they don’t understand; yet 79% feel others don’t understand

Providers experience time challenges

- Providers interrupt patients 30 seconds after they start speaking; if not interrupted, patients will speak less than two minutes

What Can We Do?

Create an Environment of TRUST

Source: Health Literacy & The Prescription Drug Experience: The Front Line Perspective From Patients, Physicians and Pharmacists, Roper ASW, May 2002
Reaching the Solution

Best Opportunity for Immediate Impact

Enhance Patient-Provider Communication

Best Way to Do It

Improve the Patient-Provider Relationship

What Needs to Be Done

Focus on Clear Health Communication
Ask Me 3 – Creates Shared Responsibility for Clear Health Communication

- Provides a consistent approach to patient-provider dialogue
- Allows patients to get information they need to manage their health
- Time-efficient for providers to reinforce healthcare instructions
What Is Ask Me 3

- Promotes three simple, but essential, questions and answers for every healthcare interaction:

1. **What Is My Main Problem?**
2. **What Do I Need to Do?**
3. **Why Is It Important for Me to Do This?**

- Diagnosis
- Treatment
- Context
Ask Me 3 – Program Materials Available in English and Spanish

Ask Me 3
Good Questions for Your Good Health

Each time you talk with your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist ask these questions:

1. What is my main problem?
2. What do I need to do?
3. Why is it important for me to do this?

The more you know about your health, the better.

Patient Brochure
Provider Brochure
Organizational Brochure
Website
Posters

Buenas Preguntas para su Salud
Pregúntame

Cada vez que hable con su médico, enfermero, o farmacéutico hágales estas preguntas:

1. ¿Cuál es mi problema mayor?
2. ¿Qué debo hacer?
3. ¿Por qué es importante para mí hacerlo?

Mientras más sepa sobre su salud, mejor.

Ask Me 3
Good Questions for Your Good Health

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Mientras más sepa sobre su salud, mejor.
We Can All Be a Part of the Solution

- Even if you are not in a position to directly answer the three questions, keep clear health communication in mind and in your dialogue when communicating with patients.

- Many people have trouble understanding medical terms. Often, these terms are better understood when explained with common words, an example or visual interpretation.
What Else Can You Do?

People Have Difficulty Making Appointments

Appointment Instructions
Also see: Urgent Care (if you are too sick to wait for an appointment)

Making a medical appointment for the first time, it is straightforward: You call 555-2222 and make a appointment at XYZ Health Services just like you would at any doctor's office.

You can request a specific clinician if you have someone in mind, or you can explain your need or problem to the appointment counselor, and he or she will schedule you with an appropriate clinician at the earliest possible date. At your first appointment you will receive a medical record card -- often referred to as your "gold card" -- which you will keep and use as your XYZ Health Services identification.

If you are unsure about whether you should make an appointment, you may call the Advice Nurse at 666-7777. Also, in advance of your first appointment, be sure to read "How to Make the Most of Your XYZ Visit."

Please call 643-7177 to make an appointment in the Specialty Clinics, including Allergy & Travel. Specialty appointments require a referral.

You may also drop by the Appointment Office to make a medical appointment. The Appointment Office is located on the first floor in Room 1111. You may also make an appointment in the Specialty Clinics by going to the Specialty Clinic reception desk, located behind the elevators on the first floor.

If you need to cancel an appointment, please call our 24-hour cancellation line at 643-7033. Please note that you will be billed for a broken appointment fee if you do not show up for your appointment and have not called to cancel it.

When making an appointment, provide people with simple options and clear facts

- Your Name __________________________
- Your Appointment Date _____________
- Time _____________________________
- Place _____________________________
- Our Telephone Number: _____________

Do not eat or drink for 6 hours before the day and time on this card.
What Else Can You Do?

People Have Trouble Understanding Phone Recordings

- Phone answered by a tape recording. Speaking quickly, the caller is offered numerous options and alternatives
- Speak slowly and clearly
- Provide an easy way to connect with a live person
- Provide options in other languages
What Else Can You Do?

People Have Trouble Reading Signs

- Some people become confused about whether this entry was intended for ambulances or for patients.

- The use of visuals clarify the message.
- Contrast in color makes it easy to read.
- Try to be consistent when hanging signs.

Ambulatory Entrance
Hospital XYZ
People Have Trouble Understanding Maps

Maps are usually hard to follow:
- Too complicated
- Codes are hard to understand
- Names and directions not always match
- Small fonts

To make maps easier to follow:
- Match the color in the map with the paint color on walls or floors
- Match the names in the map to the names on the signs
- Use 14 point font size or larger
SUCCESSFUL HEALTH COMMUNICATION

Employs all the elements as presented.
Is evaluated and reported.
Is made public by the funders and researchers.
Resources are widely available.
It is part of everyone’s job in any of the health fields.
Establish Partnerships for Health Communication

- Partners can provide resources and solutions, and share their strengths and success stories
- Reach out to possible partners in your area
I AM GLAD TO BE A RESOURCE:

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THANK YOU!
QUESTIONS?