

Health Communication Evaluation Services

Task 68

Hepatitis C- Health Communication Initiative

Results Of Hepatitis C Concept Testing Focus Group Research with Transfusion Recipients

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RESULTS OF HEPATITIS C CONCEPT TESTING FOCUS GROUP RESEARCH WITH TRANSFUSION RECIPIENTS

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

I. Purpose of the Study

Westat conducted three concept testing focus groups with transfusion recipients. These focus groups were held to provide formative research that can lead to the development of effective communication strategies. The research was designed to obtain the following information from participants:

- Reactions to individual concepts;
- Reactions to the symbol;
- Comparison of concepts;
- Credibility of logos; and
- Channels of communication.

The moderator's guide is included in Appendix A.

II. Background

The focus groups conducted on January 26 and January 27, 1999 each included nine participants. All of the participants had had at least one blood transfusion between 1970 and 1990 and were 35 to 60 years of age. Two mixed race/ethnicity groups and one Hispanic group were conducted. The mixed race/ethnicity, urban group was conducted in New York City and included five African American and four non-Hispanic white participants. The Hispanic group was also conducted in New York City. The mixed race/ethnicity, rural group was held in Madisonville, Kentucky, and included two African American and seven non-Hispanic white participants.

A non-Hispanic white female moderated the mixed rural group, and a Hispanic female conducted the Hispanic and mixed urban groups. The two mixed groups were conducted in English, and the Hispanic group was conducted in Spanish. All focus groups lasted about 90 minutes. At the end of each group, a CDC expert on hepatitis C was available to address any questions posed by the participants. In New York City, participants received a \$75 cash incentive; participants in Kentucky received \$50.

III. Summary of Findings

This focus group session presented the following three concepts:

1. Asymptomatic-Joe
2. Transfusion-Baby Jill
3. Contagion-Eduardo

Feedback on the symbol/logo was also solicited from participants. The concepts and symbol/logo can be found in Appendix B and C, respectively.

During the sessions, each concept was presented and discussed separately before being displayed side by side for comparison. Results of the discussion from each of these concepts are reported in Section IV of this report. Important findings resulting from comparing the three concepts were as follows:

- Mixed race/ethnicity groups felt the “Baby Jill” concept was most appealing.
- Hispanic participants favored the “Eduardo” concept.
- Across all three groups, participants felt the “Joe” concept would not motivate them to seek hepatitis C testing.

Implications for the Education Campaign

Overall, focus group participants indicated transfusion recipients would be motivated by a message that explicitly states transfusion recipients may be at risk for hepatitis C and expresses concern for preventing the “spread to others,” especially their family and loved ones.

Elements from the Eduardo and Joe concepts that may be incorporated into the Baby Jill concept include the sense of family and the tagline, “The sooner you find out, the more you can do,” respectively.

Hepatitis C educational messages and materials for persons who received blood transfusions before 1992 should:

- Inform transfusion recipients they are at risk;
- Make it clear that even though you may look and feel healthy, you still need to be tested for hepatitis C;
- Emphasize hepatitis C virus testing is not part of routine blood work;
- Convey that hepatitis C is a serious disease;
- Take into account important cultural and language differences;
- Be developed in color rather than black and white; and
- Include the CDC/DHHS logos.

A discussion of the overall reactions to each of the three concepts follows.

IV Focus Group Discussion

Concept A: Asymptomatic- Joe

This concept is a picture of a man and his Volkswagen bug with the text “*Joe’s had his bug for 20 years. And all this time, he’s had another bug he knows nothing about yet.*” The tag line text is “*The sooner you find out, the more you can do.*”

- Participants from all three groups felt this concept did not provide enough reasons for getting tested. There was no clear link as to their risk for hepatitis C that would motivate them to seek testing.
- Some of the participants from the urban group stated this concept suggests that older people are not exempt from the risk of getting hepatitis C.
- In all of the groups, participants mentioned the picture needs to be more serious in order to convey that hepatitis C is a serious disease.
- The tag line, “*The Sooner You Find Out, the More You Can Do,*” was found to be appealing. These words gave a sense of hope and implied treatments were available for hepatitis C.
- “Even though you may not have any symptoms, you should seek testing,” is the main idea of this concept. Only a few of the rural and urban participants seemed to grasp this idea; however, some of the Hispanic participants did perceive the asymptomatic message.
- Participants recommended that this concept reflect different races/ethnicities and use images and text that are more serious and urgent.

Key comments included:

Hepatitis C doesn’t seem very important because it doesn’t say what is bad about hepatitis C; he has a smile on his face. So is hepatitis C a bad thing? (Rural)

It would not make me [want to] go get tested. If he has had it [hepatitis C] for 39 years, he can get by for another 39 years. (Urban)

These words tell me that you could have hepatitis C and not even know about it. (Hispanic)

Concept B: Transfusion- Baby Jill

As shown in Appendix B, this concept depicts a girl with the text, “*A blood transfusion allowed Baby Jill to live to be the healthy young lady she is today. It also may have put her at risk for hepatitis C.*” The tagline text is “*Ask your doctor if you are one of*

three million Americans who may have hepatitis C.” The alternative tagline is: *“Ask your doctor if you or your loved ones should be tested for hepatitis C.”*

- The majority of rural and urban group participants reacted favorably to the Baby Jill concept because of its clear focus on blood transfusion.
- Initial reactions from the Hispanic group included the idea that hepatitis C could affect any person at any age. Most Hispanic participants perceived Baby Jill to symbolize someone whose life had been saved. Also, the depiction of a newborn in an incubator seemed to provide an emotional appeal.
- The explicit mention of “blood transfusion” in the Baby Jill concept grabbed the attention of participants. This concept also conveyed one could have hepatitis C without any symptoms.
- Most participants preferred the alternate tagline, *“Ask your doctor if you or your loved ones should be tested for hepatitis C.”*
- Most participants clearly understood the main idea that transfusion recipients are at risk for hepatitis C and should get tested.
- Participants recommended the inclusion of a toll free 800 number in the materials to call for more information and suggested an image of an adult be added to show that older transfusion recipients could also be at risk for hepatitis C.

Key comments for concept B follow:

I don't know if I've been tested for hepatitis C, but I guarantee I'm going to be tested this week. (Urban)

If a young girl like her can have it, then that would motivate me [to seek testing]. (Hispanic)

Transfusion stands out, so it makes me think I need to get tested. It cuts to the chase. If you had a blood transfusion, get tested. (Rural)

Concept C: Contagion- Eduardo

This concept is an image of a father and son shaving in front of a mirror with the text: *“If Eduardo knew he had hepatitis C, there's no way he'd share that razor with little Eddie.”* The tagline text is *“Finding out you have it is the only way to control it.”* The alternative tagline is *“Finding out you have it is the first step to control it.”*

- The initial message of contagion in the Eduardo concept seemed to be grasped immediately by the Hispanic participants. The message was also a strong motivator for participants to seek testing as soon as possible.

- Urban and rural participants felt that the concept was targeted at minorities, particularly to Hispanics.
- Rural participants said this concept was “not talking” to them because the Hispanic name Eduardo suggests hepatitis C primarily affects Hispanics and males. Also, there is no prominent reference to blood transfusions to alert them to their personal risk of hepatitis C.
- Participants preferred the original tagline, “*Hepatitis C, Finding Out You Have It is the Only Way to Control It.*” Some concern was raised about the meaning of the word “control.”
- Most participants understood the main idea that hepatitis C is contagious, but only after they were able to ignore the distraction of the safety concern about the child with a razor.
- Participants suggested using images that represent a variety of races/ethnicities, which would indicate hepatitis C is prevalent among more than just one group.
- Suggestions from the rural group included adding a more prominent reference to the importance of testing for transfusion recipients and to include an image of a sick child.

Key comments included:

It's telling me that yes, I can have it, that I have to get myself checked out but also I'm putting someone else's life at risk, it's not only me. (Hispanic)

This tells me that people without blood transfusions can also be at risk for hepatitis C. (Urban)

I would not target myself as at risk from this ad. (Rural)

First of all, I would not let a child play with a razor. The image bothers me of a razor and child. (Rural)

Symbol

The symbol includes the text: “*Hepatitis C, you may be at risk if you had a blood transfusion before 1992*” with a yellow yield sign and the letter C.

- Overall, participants reacted positively to the symbol. Participants perceived the symbol as communicating the importance of hepatitis C testing. Furthermore, the symbol was found to convey a message of caution.

- Many participants mentioned the symbol should be larger in size and more strategically placed in the materials in order to get their attention.
- Some of the participants mentioned the letter C in the symbol looked like a telephone rather than the letter C.

Logo

- Although everyone was not familiar with the CDC, most participants agreed that using the CDC logo added credibility to the concept.
- The DHHS logo was viewed positively by participants because they felt it was an indication that government was really concerned about this health problem.

The Use of Color

This topic was discussed only in the Hispanic and mixed urban groups.

- Many participants mentioned the use of color often encourages them to read further and assists in maintaining their interest.
- Throughout the Hispanic focus group discussion, participants mentioned the use of color in advertising almost always elicits positive reactions.

Channels

After receiving feedback on the use of logos, the moderator explored potential communication channels for the hepatitis C education campaign. With the exception of the following, participants in the concept testing focus groups identified the same channels mentioned in the December 1998 exploratory focus groups.

- Participants from the concept testing focus groups indicated they would notice hepatitis C messages in the following additional places:
 - community centers
 - libraries
 - groceries
 - senior citizen's homes
 - restaurants
- Participants from the concept testing Hispanic group suggested billboards, Spanish language newspapers and magazines, and commercials during novelas (Hispanic soap operas).

APPENDIX A

MODERATOR DISCUSSION GUIDE

APPENDIX B

CONCEPTS

APPENDIX C

SYMBOL AND LOGOS