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DIGITAL MEDIA AS COMMUNICATION TOOLS FOR HEALTH PROMOTION IN MANAGED HEALTH CARE

by

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the dissertation submitted for the MA degree to the University of Pretoria, apart from the help recognised, is my own work and has not been submitted to another university for a degree.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Bornman', with a long, sweeping underline.

Magda Bornman



**Health is a 'set of collective behaviours that are formed
and influenced through communication processes
in the context of aggregate social
relationships and contacts'**

(Finnegan & Viswanath, 1990:22).



SUMMARY

Two important developments took place within health care during the latter part of the twentieth century. The first was the realisation that health consumers must be assisted to improve their own health and well-being. This is done through health promotion, which is the process whereby people are empowered to increase control over the various factors that determine health. It includes all interventions that could promote health and prevent disease and disability. Its goals encompass preventative health, curative health and rehabilitation. It is therefore an integral part of health care.

For health promotion to take place, members of the public must have sufficient health information and the necessary attitudes and skills to use this information effectively in the management of their own health.

The second development is known as managed health care. A method was sought through which costs could be contained while the quality of care was ensured. It is generally believed that the only mechanism available today to reach these objectives is managed health care.

The goals of managed health care can only be met through greater participation in health decision making and when individuals are willing to take more responsibility for their own health. Thus health promotion becomes a requirement. Health promotion, with its focus on the consumer, is a pivotal point on which the success of managed health care depends.

The complexity of and the barriers in health communication necessitate the careful consideration of appropriate media to enhance and improve the success of communication. Various communication media are available, but to date little research has been done to assist the communications manager/specialist in the selection and utilisation of digital media for health promotion. To prevent costly and inappropriate application of digital media, this research was undertaken to shed light on:

- the requirements of successful communication for health promotion and factors influencing the success;
- attributes of digital media that may influence their suitability for health promotion; and
- contributions of digital media towards effective health communication.



The results of this research indicated that digital media are well suited to health promotion, provided that the criteria for successful communication are met. Although all communication cannot be replaced by digital communication, much can be gained by incorporating digital media in the communication efforts aimed at health promotion. For example, the utilisation of digital media could result in increased client control and customisation of information. Better transfer of information and knowledge and better retention of messages can take place. In addition, digital communication can improve compliance, feedback and support, and can overcome time and geographical constraints. It can also help to overcome a lack of communication skills.

KEYWORDS: Health promotion, health communication, health information, managed health care, digital media, electronic media, electronic publications, health care, health, well-being, communication

OPSOMMING

Twee belangrike ontwikkelings in gesondheidsorg het gedurende die laaste gedeelte van die twintigste eeu plaasgevind. Die eerste was die besef dat gesondheidsorgverbruikers gehelp moet word om hulle gesondheid en welstand te verbeter. Dit word gedoen deur middel van gesondheidspromosie, wat die proses is waardeur mense in staat gestel word om hulle beheer oor die verskillende faktore wat gesondheid bepaal, uit te brei. Die doelstellings omvat voorkomende, kuratiewe en rehabilitasiegesondheid. Dit is daarom 'n integrale deel van gesondheidsorg.

Vir gesondheidspromosie om te kan plaasvind, moet lede van die publiek genoeg gesondheidsinligting hê en oor die nodige houding en vaardighede beskik om die inligting doeltreffend in die bestuur van hulle eie gesondheid aan te wend.

Die tweede ontwikkeling staan bekend as bestuurde gesondheidsorg. 'n Metode is gesoek waardeur die koste van sorg in toom gehou word terwyl die kwaliteit van sorg verseker word. Daar word algemeen geglo dat bestuurde gesondheidsorg die enigste meganisme is wat vandag beskikbaar is om hierdie doelstellings te bereik.

Die doelstellings van bestuurde gesondheidsorg kan slegs bereik word wanneer individue deelneem aan besluitneming en mede-verantwoordelikheid vir hulle gesondheid aanvaar. Op die wyse word gesondheidspromosie 'n vereiste. Gesondheidspromosie met sy fokus op die verbruiker word die spilpunt waarom die sukses van bestuurde gesondheidsorg draai.

Die kompleksiteit van en die hindernisse inherent aan gesondheidskommunikasie maak dit noodsaaklik dat die aanwending van media versigtig oorweeg moet word om toe te sien dat die kommunikasie versterk en die sukses daarvan verhoog word. Verskeie kommunikasiemedie is beskikbaar vir gesondheidspromosie maar tot op hede is min navorsing gedoen om die kommunikasiebestuurder/-kundige te help in die keuse en benutting van digitale media. Om duur en ontoepaslike toepassing van digitale media te verhoed, is hierdie navorsing onderneem om lig te werp op die:

- vereistes van suksesvolle kommunikasie vir gesondheidspromosie en die faktore wat die sukses van die kommunikasie beïnvloed;
- eienskappe van digitale media wat 'n invloed mag hê op die aanwending daarvan vir gesondheidspromosie; en



- bydrae wat digitale media tot effektiewe gesondheidspromosie kan maak.

Die resultate van hierdie ondersoek het getoon dat digitale media wel geskik is vir gesondheidspromosie wanneer die kriteria vir suksesvolle kommunikasie nagekom word. Alhoewel alle kommunikasie nie met digitale kommunikasie vervang kan word nie, kan veel gewen word deur digitale media te inkorporeer by ander kommunikasiepogings gemik op gesondheidspromosie. So, byvoorbeeld, kan die benutting van digitale media lei tot groter verbruikerbeheer en die aanpassing van inligting vir spesifieke verbruikers. Oordrag van inligting en kennis, en retensie van boodskappe kan verbeter word. Hierby kan digitale kommunikasie nakoming van behandeling, terugvoer en ondersteuning verbeter, en tyd en geografiese beperkings oorbrug. Dit kan ook help om 'n gebrek aan kommunikasievaardighede te oorkom.

Sleuteltermes: Gesondheidspromosie, gesondheidskommunikasie, gesondheidsinligting, bestuurde gesondheid sorg, digitale media, elektroniese media, elektroniese publikasies, gesondheidsorg, gesondheid, welstand, kommunikasie

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