

The Potential of Role Models in Enhancing Smokers' Readiness to Change (Decision to Quit Smoking): A Case Study of Saudi National Anti-Smoking Campaign

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Abstract : Smoking has been linked to thousands of deaths worldwide. Around three million adults continue to use tobacco each day in Saudi Arabia; a sign that smoking is prevalent among Saudi population and obviously considered as a public health threat. Although the awareness against smoking is continuously running, it can be observed that smoking behavior increases noticeably as common practice especially among young adults across the world. Therefore, it was an essential step to guess what does motivate smokers to think about quit smoking. Can a graphic and emotional ad that is focusing on health consequences do really make a difference? A case study has been conducted on the Annual Anti-Smoking National Campaign, which was provided by Saudi Ministry of Health in the period of May 2017. To assess campaign's effects on the number of calls, the number of visits and online access to health messages during and after the campaign period from May to August compared with the previous campaign in 2016. The educational video was selected as a primary tool to deliver the smoking health message. The Minister of Health who is acting as a role model for young adults was used to deliver a direct message to smokers with an avoidance of smoking cues usage. Due to serious consequences of smoking, the Minister of Health delivered the news of canceling the media campaign and directing the budget to smoking cessation clinics. It was shown that the positive responses and interactions on the campaign were obviously remarkable; achieving a high rate of recall and recognition. During the campaign, the number of calls to book for a visit reached 45880 phone calls, and the total online views ran to 1,253,879. Whereas, clinic visit raised up to 213 cumulative percent. Interestingly, a total number of 15,192 patients visited the clinics along three months compared with the last year campaign's period, which was merely 4850 patients. Furthermore, around half of patients who visited the clinics were in the age from 26 to 40-year-old. There was a great progress in enhancing public awareness on: 'where to go' to assist smokers in making a quit attempt. With regard to the stages of change theory, it was predicted that by following direct-message technique; the proportion of patients in the contemplation and preparation stages would be increased. There was no process evaluation obtained to assess implementation of the campaigns' activities.

Keywords : smoking, health promotion, role model, educational material, intervention, community health

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