



ARF Study Shows Ad Impact PSAs Used In Anti-Cancer Campaign

A research study conducted recently by the Advertising Research Foundation (ARF) concluded that PSAs can induce significant changes in public health behavior. Entitled "A Strategic Research Approach to Measuring Ad Effectiveness," the project was jointly sponsored by the ARF, the Advertising Council and the American Cancer Society. The study centered around a 30-second PSA encouraging people to ask their doctors about colon cancer tests.

"The study shows that advertising in isolation can have a huge effect," said Barbara Feigin, research director at Grey Advertising in New York and chairwoman of the ARF. It also adds to the state of the art in providing evidence that advertising is accountable, she said.

The study took two years to complete and cost an estimated \$1 million, with nearly all the funding donated by the advertising, research and media communities. Its objectives were to:

- Measure the effects of PSAs on the awareness, beliefs and actions of the target audience
- Measure the effects of both average and above average media schedules over time
- Create a research model to aid in evaluating future PSA campaigns
- The colon cancer campaign was selected because it was new and awareness of the need for testing was low. Adults were also believed to be reluctant to have themselves tested for the disease which afflicts more than 150,000 Americans over the age of 40 and kills half of them each year.

According to the report summary, "in one of the toughest and most challenging areas for advertising today - that of changing attitudes and behavior for health-related issues -- the use of public service advertising alone not only increased awareness, but also reinforced people's belief, fostered their intent to act and inspired potentially life-saving action."

"Why Should I Get Screened?"

Colorectal Cancer Screening Saves Lives

Colorectal cancer is the 2nd leading cancer killer in the U.S. But it can be prevented. Screening helps find precancerous polyps so they can be removed before they turn into cancer. Screening can also find colorectal cancer early, when treatment is most effective.

If you're 50 or older—don't wait. Talk to your doctor and get screened.



www.cdc.gov/screenforlife
1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636)



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



Dr. Jay Winsten, director of the Center for Health Communication at Harvard's School of Public Health, called the study "impressive and important."

"The literature is replete with failed media campaigns," he said, and the reason they failed is the creative was not good; they were not based on research; and they had inadequate exposure or targeting of the message.

Last year, Dr. Winsten was the co-author of a report recommending that public service advertisers use marketing techniques like corporate sponsorships and dialogue in television shows to strengthen their efforts to change public behavior.

Isolating Ad Effectiveness

Advertising aimed at dissuading people from smoking or taking drugs has been studied extensively in universities. A study conducted by Stanford University in the late 1970's for example, found that print and broadcast PSA's could significantly induce people to change habits that put them at risk of heart disease.

But, as most experts point out, these studies, including those undertaken by the ad industry itself, have been unable to separate the effects of advertising from those of news coverage, editorials and publicity.

Highlights Of Findings:

PSAs Build Awareness - Awareness among those exposed to an average level of advertising increased from 11% prior to the campaign, to 29% after six months and continued to build, reaching 40% of the target households at the end of 12 months.

PSAs Can Be Used to Reinforce Positive Beliefs - When beliefs are widely held, a PSA campaign can reinforce those beliefs and inspire action.

In the study, people in the target markets were asked to answer the statement "if colon cancer is diagnosed in its early stage, it can be cured 90% of the time." The number of viewers exposed to an average level of advertising who believed this statement increased from 69% to 73%.

PSAs Can Motivate People to Action - The study found that PSAs can move people to action with an average level of advertising. It also showed that sustained advertising and targeted media placement are critical in maximizing the effectiveness of PSAs. The number of men who took action as a result of being exposed to an average level of advertising for a full year, increased from 7-12%, and from 7-15% among those exposed to above average levels. At the six-month point, however, there was either minimal or negative change in behavior.

