Editorial

Health Communication Campaign and Health Promotion

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Health communication campaign (HCC) is one of the best ways to promote the awareness of the society and educate them about their healthy habits, practices, and good healthcare. If we consider health communication as the full understanding in using communication strategies to aware people about their effective healthy choices, HCC requires strategic tools to have impact on target audiences based on the messages designed to promote the awareness and positive health-related decisions. Although applying mass media to promote health is of very high importance, health messages have special characteristics, which distinct them from other ordinary messages in the mass media. The sensitivity of health subjects, the fear that some messages may arise, and the resistance toward some messages because of the complex nature of some health problems are some of these characteristics. Other characteristics are the focus of many health messages on the sensitive and private subjects such as sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), drug abuse and substance dependence, abortion, and mental illnesses, which are difficult to understand for many of the audiences. Therefore, these characteristics are important challenges of HCC, and setting up these communication campaigns needs a complex process. In addition, if designing and disseminating messages in a communication campaign is not done in a correct way, it will set up resistance among the audiences and thus will fail [1].

Most HCCs have mainly focused on activities related to health-threatening risks among the community. In recent years, these risks have widely received the attention of the mass media and the public opinion. Since 1980, HCCs have focused their activities in resolving the challenges and conflicts due to technological developments. If the aim of running a health campaign is to modify health behaviors and to make people realize the

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health risks, the chance of achieving these aims will increase when we use the following recommendations: a) using a combination of different strategies in implementing them, b) paying attention to the audience, c) utilizing different models and theories, d) providing enough and adequate information, and e) increasing service availability [2]. HCCs have widely been used to promote different health behaviors including seat belt use, dietary change, medication use, exercise and physical activities, dental care, social support, substance use prevention and cessation, family planning, use of health services, and testing and screening for diseases [3, 4].

HCCs could be a very effective tool in health promotion. They have been launched in different countries. Some of them, which have been evaluated, are 1) VERB™ campaign to encourage children aged 9–13 years (twins) to be physically active every day; 2) "Truth" campaign: a national antismoking campaign to discourage tobacco use among youths; 3) Folic acid campaigns in Holland, Puerto Rico, and Mexico, 4) Health nutrition campaigns, 5) Disease prevention campaigns, and 6) Physical activity campaigns. Launching many other HCCs indicate their effectiveness in promoting the health of different groups of the society. Therefore, in order to change high-risk habits-proven to harm people's health, we can effectively use HCCs with the help of the members of the community.

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