

Connecting with Good Health: Podcasting as a Means of Providing Health Education on College Campuses

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Sara Abelson, Andi Charlton,
Terri Ridenour and Sarah Segerlind

University of Michigan, School of Public Health and
University Health Service

Overview

- 1) Process: Assessing the needs of our target population and determining how to best use podcasting technology at U-M
- 2) Product: Writing scripts, creating podcasts
- 3) Evaluation Results: Qualitative data from focus groups and surveys

Model Guiding the Development of Project

- The Spiral Technology Action Research (STAR) Model
- Combines health promotion theory with Information and Communication Technology systems design approaches
- Five cycles: listening, planning, doing, studying and acting

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Target Audience

- University of Michigan, Ann Arbor campus
 - 25,555 undergrads, ~14,000 graduate students
- University Health Service
 - Serves U-M students, faculty and staff
 - ~70,000 visits per year
- Relevant U-M Health Findings:
 - An estimated 13% of students suffer from depression¹
 - 42% of students reported feeling so depressed it was difficult to function at least once within the last school year²
 - 25% of female students report symptoms of disordered eating¹

¹ Healthy Minds (2006); ² U-M National College Health Assessment (2006)

Background: Health Information

- **1/11** students at the University of Michigan reported receiving **no health information** related to 10 broad topic areas
- Greatest number of students reported receiving information about **sexual assault** (58%); fewest number of students reported receiving information on **suicide prevention** (13.0%)
- UM students listed the **Internet** as their most used source of health information, second only to their parents

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Technology

- **Podcast**

A digital recording of a radio broadcast or similar program, made available on the Internet for downloading to a personal audio player (Oxford English Dictionary)

- Can be downloaded automatically via subscription (e.g. synching your iPod), or obtained manually
- Useful for providing health information:
 - Offers privacy – can be listened to alone at one's computer
 - Can be listened to on-the-go: good for busy students!

Background: Access to Podcasting

- Computer access is ubiquitous on college campuses
- iPod/MP3 ownership is high and increasing
 - 69% of respondents to the U-M 2007 Information Technology Central Services student survey reported owning an iPod/MP3 player. This is up 13% from 2006.
- Classroom use is only moderate
 - 78% of respondents had not used an Apple iPod or other MP3 player for coursework
 - 12% of respondents had used such devices for listening to seminars or lectures

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Health Messages

- Two topics: Depression and Eating Disorders
- Format:
 - Educational
- What:
 - Short: 2-4 minutes
 - A “radio show”
 - Episodic
- Implementation:
 - iTunesU & UHS Website

PLAY PODCAST

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Evaluation

- Expert Reviews
 - Technology experts, eLearning specialists, psychiatry and psychology professionals, social workers, health educators
 - Experts provided feedback on script content, health information, and technological requirements
- Focus Groups
 - 11 undergraduates (5 male, 6 female)
 - Ages 18-24
- Informal Open-ended Surveys
 - 10 graduate students

Findings & Recommendations

- Content:
 - Provide variety of info (symptoms, resources, stats)
 - Include material specific and personal to U-M students (not too medical)
 - Choose topics that are relevant, informative and helpful
 - Create some podcasts on specific concerns and others on more general topics
- Length, organization, structure:
 - Keep podcasts short!
 - Keep them organized

Findings & Recommendations

- Sound, tone, speaker:
 - Maintain a positive and reassuring tone, while also conveying seriousness to establish credibility
 - Incorporate students in development and as the speakers in the podcast
 - Use multiple male and female voices and a conversational tone to make the podcast more varied and interesting
 - Create a recognizable identity for the podcasts (with the speaker or jingle)

Findings & Recommendations

- Use:
 - Must be well advertised, easily accessible and useable and quick to provide information
 - Students will listen if the topic is relevant to them or if they need information
 - Release information in episodes and target health information at appropriate times over the course of the year

Unexpected Challenges

- The breadth & depth of technological knowledge required to fully understand podcasting and create podcasts.
- We had to serve as experts of both the podcast (medium) and the health scripts (content), each with its own set of unique challenges.

Implications

- There is a need for better methods to disseminate health information to college students
- iPod/MP3 use on campuses is growing quickly
- Colleges and universities have not yet fully implemented podcasting technology into their educational efforts, though use is on the rise
- Health educators can wait for further dissemination of these tools or lead the field

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Health Education of the Future

- *“This is ultimately where people will turn to for their health information, where they will search for answers...but not enough students are currently listening to podcasts.” – UM Student*
- *“This is a GREAT idea. I m completely sold. You are all really on to something.” – UM Apple Consultant*

For more information, contact: sabelson@umich.edu

Citations

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THANK YOU:

Project Consultants

- John M. Hickey, Jr., Apple Systems Engineer for U-M
- Sheri Schultz, Apple Representative for U-M
- Vic Divecha, eLearning Specialist for SPH
- Chris Myers, Webmaster, U-M, School of Education
- **Melissa Valerio**, PhD, MPH, Assistant Professor of Health Behavior and Health Education
- **Kathy Edgren**, Director, Health Promotion and Community Relations, U-M Health Service
- Erica Dodde, LLMSW, Eating Disorder and Body Image Health Educator working at UHS
- Chinyere Neale, UHS Health Educator
- Jamie M. Abelson, MSW, U-M Research Associate, Social/Behavioral Sciences
- James L. Abelson, PhD, MD, U-M Professor of Psychiatry

Aims/Objectives

- Assess needs of target population and how to best use podcasting technology at U-M.
- Develop and evaluate health education messages for podcasting and podcast prototypes.
- Create a manual for University Health Service staff to sustain project.