

Upward flow of cancer screening appeals: Be brief and provide context

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Background

- The proposition that adolescent daughters can provide their mothers or female guardian with cancer screening information is based on the assumption that these messages are culturally and normatively acceptable.
- It is equally important to determine if a screening appeal by the adolescent can be successfully recalled and conveyed to the recipient, the mother.

Methods

- We conducted an observational study with 30 African-American mother-daughter pairs from low-income neighborhoods.
- We developed and shared with the daughters a brief screening message that underscored breast and cervical cancer disparities and the importance of early detection.
- We evaluated the daughters' recall ability immediately following dissemination of the screening information and contrasted this with the information shared with her mother.
- We evaluated the personalization of the message and the type of appeal used to encourage screening.

Results

- The daughters personalized the message using family specific information, and provided screening facts combined with an emotional appeal.
- The majority of daughters appeared comfortable and motivated sharing the screening information with their mothers.
- Daughters indicated a strong sense of pride sharing new information; while mothers appeared to find the cancer disparities context meaningful.

Information attrition

- The majority of daughters was able to recall the brief and focused information correctly to their mothers.
- There was evidence of some attrition of information between the recall test and message delivery.
 - For example, 93% of daughters were able to recall correctly the number of African American women that died from breast cancer in 2009, yet only 69% of daughter shared this information with their mother during message delivery.

Effective appeal approach

- 18% of mothers felt an emotional appeal would be most effective.
- 36% of mothers felt a factual/rational appeal would be most effective.
- 45% of mothers felt a combination of the two would be most effective.

Conclusions

Implications for message development

- The message needs to be brief, concise, and very focused.
- A combination appeal that includes both facts as well as emotions may be the most effective.
- Inserting the context of racial disparities into the message appeal may enhance recall ability and saliency for both daughter and mother about the importance of early detection.