

Tips for Developing Chlamydia Screening Messages and Materials for Young Women

Background

- Qualitative research was conducted to elicit consumer feedback on the design (i.e., visual elements and layout), concept (i.e., general idea), and approach (i.e., tone and feel) for educational chlamydia-screening materials and products.
- A total of 18 focus groups and one dyad were conducted in four cities across the United States (Atlanta, GA; Alexandria, VA; Chicago, IL; and Dallas, TX) in 2009-2010.

This study included three segments of sexually active females, ages 15–25 years:

- Teenagers, aged 15–17
- Young adult students, aged 18–25 (in school)
- Working young adults, aged 18–25

Participants were recruited by market research firms and focus groups were conducted in professional focus group facilities.

Moderators used a semi-structured guide to (a) explore participants' existing knowledge and awareness of chlamydia; and (b) gain in-depth feedback about draft and existing educational materials/products.

Materials tested:

- Six poster concepts
- Six calls to action
- 13 logos
- Three types of information about chlamydia (i.e., basic information, details about talking to one's doctor, details about talking to one's partner)
- Nine video public service announcements (PSAs)

All materials except four logos and the PSAs were developed specifically for this research.

Lessons Learned from Consumer Research

Two concepts resonated most with young women:

- Using an emotional appeal that taps into young women's deeper values and aspirations, making them think about their future and how their decisions now can make an impact on their life (e.g., having a family/child). Specifically, tying chlamydia to the prospect of infertility (i.e., not being able to realize their full life dreams/potential) motivated young women to consider being screened for chlamydia.
- Framing STD testing as a normative behavior and suggesting that everyone needs STD testing.

Approach

- Materials/messaging should use aspirational, empowering, or light-hearted approaches.
 - Approaches that are light-hearted or include (tasteful) humor to capture attention are suggested, but content/approach should take the issue of STDs seriously.
- Positive/empowering approaches should emphasize simple action steps that can be taken to prevent the prospect of infertility. For example: although there may be negative health effects from chlamydia, they can be prevented with regular testing and treatment.



Concept normalizing STD testing was well received by audiences.



Few people talk about getting tested for STDs, but lots of them do it. Get tested. You'll be in good company.

STDs happen more than you think. To single people, people in relationships, even people who've only had one partner. Often they can't tell by looking. That's why more and more people are finding out for themselves-by getting tested. Get tested regularly. It is the only way to know for sure.

The Woman You Want To Be concept tested well with audiences.

Approach (continued)

- Other, more immediate/physical health consequences of chlamydia (e.g., severe, chronic pain) should be considered to appeal to those who may not be motivated by the prospect of infertility.
- Use of alarming statistics (e.g., about the prevalence of chlamydia, its ease of transmission, and possible consequences) may be considered if accompanied by information that empowers women with simple, actionable steps to take. However, fear appeals should be considered with caution, as they may turn audiences off, stigmatize STDs and infected persons, and have a boomerang effect.
 - Fear appeals that highlight or exaggerate the visual symptoms of chlamydia should not be used, as they perpetuate the misperception that "you would know if you or someone else had an STD."
 - Appeals that stigmatize those who are infected (playing on social fears) should also not be used.
- Messaging that used positive peer pressure (i.e., peer pressure to get tested/do the right thing) received varied reviews from the audience. Teenagers found more appeal in messaging about positive peer pressure than young adults, for whom peer pressure may be less of a concern.
- Participants had mixed feelings both about the focus of a potential campaign on "STDs" versus "chlamydia," and on the target audiences being "women only" versus "both men and women." Young women may feel stigmatized by, or defensive about a campaign focused on women for an STD that affects both males and females. Participants were particularly sensitive to language stating that "All sexually active women should be tested for chlamydia," which suggested to some that all women who have sex are promiscuous.
 - If messaging does focus on chlamydia and women, it should highlight infertility, contextualized within a women's health framework. It should also acknowledge the role of men (e.g., as supportive partners).
 - On the other hand, it may be possible to promote chlamydia screening among young women using more general messaging (i.e., STD focused messaging that includes both men and women) and strategically targeted channels/settings/dissemination.

Messages should:

- ✓ Be direct and upfront.
- ✓ Normalize STD testing.
- ✓ Suggest that people are not alone—that everyone, across races/ethnicities, genders, ages, and socioeconomic classes is at risk for STDs and should be tested.

Content should consider:

- ✓ Referencing men's roles in relationships and STD testing/prevention.
- ✓ Including specific information about STDs (e.g., they can be asymptomatic & lead to infertility).

Messages should not:

- Be too graphic (e.g., use images or language that may be considered "gross," such as an image of a urine sample or references to "pissing" rather than "urinating").
- Stereotype women or suggest that only women need testing (implying that men do not).
- Minimize the seriousness of STDs or testing (i.e., imply that testing is easy or unimportant, or something that people should "just deal with").
- Be condescending or offensive.

Popular calls to action that resonated included:

- Get informed. Get tested. Get on with your life.
- No symptoms is no excuse. Get tested.
- Testing is easy. Knowing is everything.

Logos

- Audiences were interested in logos that use straightforward text and relevant images (stick figures were very popular).
- Do not use acronyms in logos if the acronym is unfamiliar to the audience.
- Include references to the intended behavior.

Design

- Use relatable social settings. Context should depict a situation familiar to target audiences.
- Show relatable people who look like the target audience.
- Convey relatable friendships or real-life conversations between friends.
- Show a diversity of races/ethnicities, ages (within age range of target audience) and levels of socioeconomic status.
- Use bright colors that stand out and break the clutter (avoid neutral colors).

Sample Logos



Channels and Sources

Internet/Web-based:

- Audiences had interest in learning about chlamydia and STDs through the internet. Information should be brief and address their concerns.
- An interactive website should include components such as: a clinic locator, frequently asked questions (FAQs), personal testimonies, blogs, chat rooms, quizzes, polls, inspirational quotes, public service announcements/videos, opportunities to chat with or submit a question to a health professional, and a hotline to contact for more information.
- A website should not include games or other components that minimize seriousness.

Print:

- Audiences had interest in receiving content through brochures, newspapers, and magazines.

Television:

- Audiences had interest in viewing PSAs about chlamydia and STDs.
- Audiences did not like announcements that were short (under 20 seconds) or include fast speaking.

Mobile Phone/Text Messaging:

- Audiences were not interested in receiving information about chlamydia through text messaging.

Interpersonal Communication:

- Health care providers and family members (especially mothers and sisters) were considered to be sources that young women consulted with questions about STDs. Friends, mothers and sex partners may be consulted prior to seeking STD testing and should be considered as potential intermediaries.
- Use of celebrities: While celebrities may effectively catch the audience's attention, the message may not necessarily be retained. Participants suggested that a PSA could lose credibility if viewers do not think the celebrity is appropriate for the topic.
 - Celebrities should be used to capture attention and promote the campaign.
 - Campaign should also enlist real people whom audiences can relate to, to tell real-life stories/testimonials and make the issue relevant.

Note: This research was qualitative and exploratory in nature; intended to guide CDC's communication efforts. Consumer preferences for chlamydia information may vary by population and change with context and time. To the extent possible, informational materials should be pretested with members of the target audience to ensure that they are relevant and appropriate.



Poster developed based on CDC research, by the GYT Campaign.