



A Century of Cancer Awareness Health Promotion

This project investigates the approach to cancer awareness health promotion over the past 100 years, looking at print materials to analyse themes and changes in approach.

Methodology:

This research project was undertaken with the goal of better understanding cancer awareness health promotion efforts of the past 100 years. Previous literature was researched and reviewed and 162 past cancer promotion materials were analysed.

Appropriate literature was searched through Te Waharoa, using key words such as "cancer promotion", "health promotion" and "cancer awareness". The literature review provided a scope for the analysis of the print materials, and comparisons of themes were able to be made.

Three main themes were found: the dominance of gender roles and stereotypes in cancer awareness health promotion, the frequency of misrepresentation in regard to high risk cancer patients and target audiences, and the presence of fear appeals and hope appeals.

References:

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- Clarke, J., & Robinson, J. (1999). Testicular Cancer: Medicine and Machismo in the Media (1980-94). 3(3), 263-282.
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- Kline, K. N., & Mattson, M. (2000). Breast Self-Examination Pamphlets: A Content Analysis Grounded in Fear Appeal Research. *Health Communication*, 12(1), 1-21.

Conclusions:

Gender roles

The emphasis on gender in the promotion of cancer is evident in the past literature as well as the collected print material. Females are often seen as weak, blame-worthy and responsible for the health of the entire family. Males, on the other hand, are portrayed as strong and courageous, yet incapable of taking care of their own health.

Misrepresentation

The lack of diversity is clear, particularly in the early stages of the century. The stereotypical image of young, slim, white females, and strong, masculine, white males is most frequently seen in the materials over the past 100 years, and the more perhaps high risk groups are not being presented as greatly.

Fear and hope appeals

Both fear and hope appeals are used in cancer awareness health promotion to educate the public and encourage action. These appeals have different roles in promotion, for example, fear appeals may use fatality statistics to build urgency to have a check up, while hope appeals may use gentler language to encourage treatment for those who have been diagnosed with cancer. Emotions of fear and hope, while at opposite ends of the spectrum, have the power to create action, which is the aim of cancer awareness health promotion.

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