MEASURING THE IMPACT OF TV STORYLINES AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH TO EDUCATE THE COMMUNITY ABOUT HEALTH IN THE UNITED STATES

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Author: Vicki Beck, MS Director, Hollywood, Health & Society, USC Annenberg Norman Lear Center
Co-author: Grace Huang, M.P.H., USC Annenberg Norman Lear Center.

CDC and USC analysis of data (Beck and Pollard) from the national Porter Novelli Healthstyles Survey has shown a consistent trend over three years (1999 to 2001) among regular TV viewers in the United States who report they learn, discuss and take actions after hearing about health topics in TV storylines. Bandura’s Social Learning Theory also suggests that the Entertainment Education strategy of embedding health messages into storylines of popular TV programs may influence modeling of health promotion behavior.

In this presentation, we will summarize and compare findings from seven studies conducted between 2001 and 2004 that demonstrate the impact of specific health content in entertainment TV storylines on corresponding knowledge, attitudes, beliefs and behaviors associated with the health topic. We will include at least three examples of additional media outreach that was developed from a storyline, to extend the public health messages to other media formats, i.e. public service announcements, talk shows, Web sites and news stories on the health topic. The impact of these additional efforts to reinforce messages and educate the community will be reported, including a broad-based effort by a Spanish-language network in the United States.

Findings are based on storylines that addressed HIV/AIDS, other sexually transmitted diseases, cardiovascular disease, smoking/cancer, breast cancer and bioterrorism. All appeared in very popular prime time and daytime dramas and telenovelas that aired on major TV networks and one Spanish-language network in the United States during this period. Findings are based on data from the 2003 Porter Novelli HealthStyles Survey, the Harvard School of Public Health and Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the National Cancer Institute’s Cancer Information Service, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s National STD and AIDS Hotline, and Telemundo Network. In one group of studies, data will be compared between exposed and non-exposed respondents. In a second group of studies, pre- and post-test data will be reported. And in the third group of studies, hotline caller data will be evaluated in terms of broadcast air dates and times of public service announcements accompanying TV health storylines.