

VOICES OF EXPERIENCE

Seven Outreach Strategies for Disseminating Prostate Cancer Information to African American Men



OVERVIEW

This report shares key strategies related to reaching African-American men and assisting them in engaging in informed decision-making related to prostate cancer screening. These strategies come from a series of discussion forums in Marion and Lake counties in which a wide array of public health professionals, community members, educators, and faith-based leaders in the African-American community shared both personal and professional experiences.

The experiences and useful ideas derived from discussion forum participants described in the following pages center around the following seven strategies that can be applied to public health outreach efforts to better inform African-American men age 40-65 about prostate cancer:

- Develop Relationships Through Multidimensional Approaches
- Make it Personal...so it Becomes Relevant
- Go Where They Are
- Give Them the Truth, Make it Simple, and Don't Overwhelm
- Get Their Attention with Relevant Themes and Incentives
- Enlist Community Spokespeople, Survivors, and Family Members to Lend Influence
- Measure Success Over Time

INTRODUCTION

Prostate cancer is the most commonly diagnosed cancer and the second leading cause of cancer death among Indiana men. African-American men in Indiana die of prostate cancer more often than any other racial or ethnic group. The Prostate Specific Antigen (PSA) screening test can detect early-stage prostate cancer, although it is unclear whether early detection improves health outcomes. For that reason, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), along with a number of national medical organizations, recommend informed decision-making as opposed to mass screening for all men.

The CDC states that informed decision-making occurs when an individual understands the nature and risks of prostate cancer; the risks, benefits, and alternatives to screening; and makes a decision consistent with his preferences and values, or defers the decision to a later time. All major medical organizations promote informed decision-making, as studies have shown that African-American men have poor awareness and knowledge about prostate cancer. As such, a number of public health efforts have been undertaken to better inform African-American men in Indiana about prostate cancer.

The purpose of this report is to share key strategies related to reaching African-American men and disseminating information that will assist them in engaging in informed decision-making related to prostate cancer screening. The Indiana State Department of Health contracted with the Center for Evaluation and Education Policy at Indiana University to facilitate four discussion forums (two in Marion County and two in Lake County in May 2005). The purpose of the discussion forums was to gather information on effective strategies for reaching African-American men age 40-65 with information about prostate cancer. Across all of the forums, a wide array of public health professionals, community members, educators, and faith-based leaders in the African-American community participated in the discussions and shared both personal and professional experiences. Their valuable experience and useful ideas, summarized in the following pages, centers around seven main strategies that can be applied to public health outreach efforts to better inform African-American men age 40-65 about prostate cancer.

Strategy #1: Develop Relationships through Multidimensional Approaches

“The approach must be multi-programmatic...you've got to reach some people in the morning, some people in the afternoon, some people in the evening...some people on weekends, some people through the week...you need to have a multi-media campaign, a grassroots campaign, a word-of-mouth campaign...You don't pick one time or one day or one approach...there is no one right way...”

One of the strongest messages participants expressed was the necessity for programmatic efforts to be multidimensional, multifaceted, and built on developing relationships within the community. Participants raised concerns that programmatic outreach efforts targeting African-American males often tend to be exclusively focused on a certain economic class of men, particularly the middle class. Media strategies such as television or radio advertising encouraging men to go see their primary care physician, or access services far away from their homes or work, can be somewhat effective, but not for the comprehensive economic spectrum of African-American men. Participants explained that outreach strategies limited to a single day, time, or setting would only reach men for whom that day, time, or setting was appealing. Participants agreed that some dates, times, and settings would likely reach more men than others, but relying on a single approach would only reach a certain demographic group of African-American men. Using a variety of locations (see Strategy #3), and marketing approaches (see Table 1), will increase the likelihood of reaching a larger cross-section of men.

There were many strong suggestions that a “one-time only” approach will be both ineffective and harmful in developing the long-term relationships within targeted populations that are essential to a successful outreach program (see Strategy #7). Participants said that too often

in their community, many programmatic efforts were from “outsiders” who, after their event or program, were never seen again in the community. Participants noted that repeated contacts were the most successful way to build relationships. Utilizing the expertise, credibility, and locations of existing organizations and stable services indigenous to the local community may be the most effective tool in enhancing programmatic success. This provides excellent opportunities for regional and/or statewide organizations (that may have the greater resources needed for multidimensional approaches) to partner with local organizations (that may have greater potential to build specific relationships within the community).

Table 1. Marketing Suggestions by Participants

- Networking (word of mouth)
- Billboards
- Fliers
- Worksites during shift changes
- Church bulletins
- PSAs on public television and radio
- Press releases
- Special interest stories in local newspapers

Strategy #2: Make it Personal...so it Becomes Relevant

“Imagine a commercial or a poster board...with a grandson on there saying, 'My grandfather can come to my kindergarten graduation because he had his prostate checked.' ”

“To pass [his] values of masculinity, sincerity, faithfulness, and higher education to [his] grandchild resonates further for grandpa to be aware of where he stands in relation to his health...”

Participants consistently described African-American men as unlikely to access

healthcare for preventive services, primarily due to a set of priorities that elevate taking care of one’s family over going to the doctor. Participants said that when men seek care, it tends to not be preventive in nature, but rather when there are signs that “something is wrong” or they are already feeling sick. Explanations for why this occurs varied, but the most consistent reason given was that accessing preventive health services fell low on their list of priorities. Specifically, going to the doctor is a low priority for men when they are not experiencing any symptoms. In contrast, staying at work for another hour to provide support for one’s family is a much higher priority.

Although there are certainly additional barriers that deter African-American men from seeking preventive health services, the high priority these men place on providing support for their family is a relevant theme that could encourage their use of preventive health services, according to discussion forum participants. Specifically, communications related to the importance of longevity, taking care of one’s family, and seeing one’s grandchildren grow up were cited as messages that would resonate with African-American men and encourage them to seek information and utilize preventive health services. Because African-American men age 40-65 place a high value on taking care of their family, messages related to “being there” for their family by taking care of their health were described as potentially powerful (see Table 2).

A second theme related to personal motivators that could encourage information gathering and preventive health practices involved first-hand knowledge of family or community members who had prostate cancer. Discussion forum participants consistently shared that knowing someone with prostate cancer (especially a family member) served as a catalyst for them to seek out additional information and/or get screened for the disease. Moreover, because families often have a “veil of secrecy” around health issues such as cancer, many men are not aware the disease has already affected their relatives and they may be at increased risk.

When men find out that family members or people in their community have had direct experience with prostate cancer, the possibility of the disease affecting them becomes much more real.

to provide information at non-traditional locations where African-American men with lower incomes spend time. The township trustee’s office, local banks, affordable car dealerships, homeless shelters, and temporary employment agencies were among the suggested locales (see Table 3).

“We’re talking about three different issues...We’re going from basic information about the disease, to information about you have the disease, to information about treatment. You see what I mean? That’s three different topics all in one subject.”

<p>Table 2. Approaches to Encourage Informed Decision-Making</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have survivors tell their story • Encourage learning about family health history • Discuss: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Longevity o Taking care of one’s family o Seeing one’s grandchildren grow up

Participants consistently said that efforts to provide prostate cancer information to African-American men should include specific action-related resources designed to provide them with information throughout the entire process, at the appropriate times. Initially men need to know basic information about prostate cancer in order to make informed decisions, in addition to where they can go for screening (if that is their informed decision), how much it will cost, and what will then happen if the test is positive. This information should be presented in a clear and concise format. Therefore, while certain details and action-related information can serve to reduce uncertainties that serve as barriers to preventive healthcare for men, too much information can be overwhelming and increase feelings of uncertainty about seeing a doctor for preventive healthcare. Table 4 provides a list of complete and concise information recommended by the CDC for dissemination to African-American males.

**Strategy #3:
Go Where They Are**

“We’ve got to think differently...instead of having them come to us, we need to go to them...especially in non-traditional locations...”

Participants said programs designed to bring African-American men to a central community location can be successful in providing education on prostate cancer: the recent large numbers of African-American men being screened at the Indianapolis Black Expo and other health fairs were cited as cases in point. Yet, participants also mentioned that educational programs offered at locations which many African-American men already frequent may be more effective than centrally located events. Disseminating information and providing services at African-American barber-shops, churches, alumni fraternities and sororities, men’s conferences, and sporting events are some examples provided by participants.

Similar to advice offered about being intentionally inclusive of African-American men of differing economic status, participants mentioned that providing informational services in the aforementioned locations may not be sufficient to reach African-American men of differing economic levels. It is also necessary

**Strategy #4:
Give Them the Truth, Make it Simple, and Don’t Overwhelm**

“You talk about the stigma, you talk about the approach to this thing. There’s too much information. This is how you take the prostate out. It leaves you impotent, does it? You know I worked in urology 13 years ago and that’s not how it works anymore. There’s a lot of scientific procedures ... to prevent men from losing their manhood. Stigma. Again, this is what needs to be addressed up front. Good information.”

<p>Table 3. Recommended Locations for Reaching a Diversity of African-American Men</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barbershops • Churches • Men’s conferences • Sporting events • Trustee’s office • Temporary employment agencies • Homeless shelters • Car dealerships • Local Banks • Male Organizations (100 Black Men, Prince Hall Masons, Indiana Commission on the Social Status of Black Men) • Worksites
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Participants also said that information dissemination and service delivery must be done in a culturally competent manner. Participants said that while it may be preferable to have service delivery done by competent African-American males, the likelihood of this occurring was rare given the demographic make-up of healthcare providers. Therefore, the training of healthcare providers to ensure that information dissemination strategies are done in a culturally appropriate manner will aid in the success of any outreach effort.

Table 4. Recommended Information Topics Related to Prostate Cancer

- What is the prostate? Prostate cancer? Causes of prostate cancer?
- What is Benign Prostatic Hypertrophy (BPH)
- What is an African-American’s risk for prostate cancer?
- What are the symptoms of prostate cancer?
- How do you screen for prostate cancer?
- What do medical experts say about screening?
- What are the benefits and risks of prostate cancer screening?

Complete information can be found at:

www.cdc.gov/cancer/prostate/prospdf/aaprosguide.pdf

Strategy #5: Get Their Attention with Relevant Themes and Incentives

“You know when you take care of your car... You make sure it's looking good and you also take care of the tires, you get the tune-ups, you do all these things taking care of that car. You know you should be taking care of yourself as well. Making sure you're getting your tune-up or you're getting your regular checkup. You need to take care of yourself.”

In all of the forums, participants discussed specific themes (see Table 5) and incentives to attract African-American men to outreach events. Perhaps the most commonly mentioned theme involved drawing parallels between maintenance for an automobile and maintenance for a man’s health. Encouraging men to take care of themselves like they take care of their car, through regular “maintenance checks,” was an idea that garnered widespread support among discussion forum participants. Other themes suggested by participants related to sports (often specific sports such as baseball) and “looking good, feeling good” events that involved a range of activities related to external appearance (e.g., free haircuts) and internal health (e.g., blood pressure screenings). Participants also noted that African-American men would be more likely to attend events that involved “one-stop shopping” (where a number of multidimensional activities were included

in the same event) as opposed to events that were more singularly focused on “health-related issues.”

Participants also noted African-American men are more likely to attend educational and outreach events when desirable incentives are involved. For example, a free car wash could serve as a powerful incentive to get men to attend an educational event. Tickets to a ball game or movie passes were also cited as desirable incentives.

Strategy #6: Enlist Community Spokespeople, Survivors, and Family Members to Lend Influence

“If you are able to find a person that’s well known or that has suffered with the disease or a national person that is willing to discuss their personal history with the entire nation then that would be one powerful way of getting the word out...”

In every forum, participants repeatedly and passionately identified African-American men and their families who have survived prostate cancer as critical in motivating men to receive information and make informed decisions. Fear of the possibility of having cancer, especially prostate cancer, was identified as one barrier preventing African-American men from making informed decisions about their health. Participants noted that survivors represent hope: even if you have prostate cancer, it is possible to live a long and healthy life. Survivors and their families embody this notion.

Further, a well-known national spokesperson can increase the impact of an outreach effort, especially if the spokesperson is an African-American male. Participants cited national spokespersons in other disease areas as effective in providing information. Former Presi-

Table 5. Themes and Incentives Recommended by Participants

Themes:

- Look good, feel good
- Maintenance checks
- Check it all in one stop
- You can’t save me unless you save you
- Don't wait until it is too late
- Make sure you get your tune-up
- Be healthy on the inside and look good on the outside

Incentives:

- Home improvement gift certificates (Lowe’s, Home Depot, etc.)
- Tickets to sporting events
- Movie passes
- Free car washes
- Tool kits

dent Jimmy Carter and First Lady Nancy Reagan as spokespeople for cancer awareness, former professional football player and coach Mike Ditka for treating erectile dysfunction, and talk radio host Tom Joyner and his “take your loved one to the doctor” campaign were cited as examples of national figures that have aided various causes. A national African-American male spokesperson for prostate cancer, especially if this person was a survivor himself, would greatly enhance the attention paid to prostate cancer awareness among African-American men.

Participants also mentioned the vital importance of local influential leaders as effective in influencing men because of their personal connection to many in the community. African-American ministers were mentioned as being a relevant constituency whose leadership would be valuable to prostate cancer education and awareness. As an example, participants noted when one highly influential African-American minister, Reverend Charles R. Williams, revealed he had prostate cancer, participation in prostate cancer activities among African-American men increased notably at the Indiana Black Expo’s Health Fair.

All of the forum participants said African-American women — spouses, girlfriends, significant others, and mothers — are very influential in motivating men to attend to their health needs. Participants often remarked that many men don’t consider visits for preventive healthcare until they have been told of its value by their wife or mother, or have seen “prevention in action” among women (i.e., mammograms, pap tests, etc.).

**Strategy #7:
Measure Success Over Time**

“The best way to reach men is still one-on-one communication, one man talking to one man...it may not start off big, but it will grow...”

“You’ve got to start small and build...people are going to be wary of you initially...but after you show them you have good information and are in it for the long-term, they will come...”

Programmatic success is often measured by short-term participation, or the number of people who attend one event. Participants in the forums frequently indicated success must be measured over time. Participants also indicated one of the most powerful methods of communication within the African-American community is word-of-mouth and one-on-one communication, specifically men talking to other men. Programs able to attract a small group of men will likely recruit growing numbers of men over time.

Word-of-mouth communication can be a double-edged sword, however, in that either a positive or negative message may be disseminated throughout the community. Participants were clear that even if initial outreach effort results are relatively small, it is of critical importance for these outreach efforts to be highly effective for “positive” word-of-mouth to spread and attract more men to the outreach effort over time. Initial activities with unclear information or poorly managed sessions will likely create either a lack of dialogue in the community about the event, or negative word-of-mouth communication, both detrimental to the long-term viability of any outreach effort.

Now more than ever, public health organizations are held accountable by their funders to demonstrate the results of their outreach efforts. Because funders often require annual reporting, the strategy of “measuring success over time” may appear less than practical. Assessing the success of outreach efforts over time is possible, but it requires more than simply counting the number of individuals attending specific events or participating in various screenings. Instead, public health professionals should tailor their evaluation efforts to examine the extent to which participants have attended other related events, communicated the relevant information to their friends and family, and/or sought out other related resources (see Table 6 for evaluation questions related to the potential impact of an event over time). In this way, the importance of specific events can begin to be understood within the larger context of the multidimensional approaches described earlier in this report.

Table 6. Evaluation Questions Related to Potential Impact Over Time
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did you find out about this event? • Have you attended other community events that have provided information on prostate cancer? • Are you likely to tell others about this event? Who? • As a result of attending this event or similar events, have you talked more about prostate cancer with members of your family and/or community? • As a result of attending this event or similar events, how likely are you to encourage others to attend similar events?

BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

In summary, public health professionals, community members, educators, and faith-based leaders in the African-American community throughout Indiana have identified seven main strategies for enhancing public health outreach efforts to better inform African-American men age 40-65 about prostate cancer. These strategies, while described individually in this report, should be applied simultaneously to outreach efforts. For example, although themes and incentives can increase the attractiveness of specific events (Strategy #5), multidimensional approaches that bring programming efforts to locations frequented by African-American men (Strategies #1 and #3) are going to yield greater levels of success than intermittent, isolated programs. Similarly, approaches should employ messages to personalize the importance of preventive care (Strategy #2), while at the same time providing complete and concise information related specifically to prostate cancer (Strategy #4). Applied together, these strategies can help increase the impact of public health outreach efforts that disseminate information on prostate cancer to African-American men age 40-65.

Seven Strategies for Enhancing Prostate Cancer Outreach Efforts

1. **Develop Relationships Through Multidimensional Approaches** - effective information dissemination strategies must be designed to be long-term, sustainable, relationship development oriented, and focused on cultivating supportive relationships with stable community organizations.
2. **Make it Personal...So it Becomes Relevant** - because African-American men age 40-65 place a high value on taking care of their family, messages related to "being there" for their family by taking care of their health are very powerful.
3. **Go Where They Are** - successful educational programs should be offered at places and locations in the community where African-American men are, and should be offered at non-traditional locations in order to reach a larger cross-section of men.
4. **Give Them the Truth, Make it Simple, and Don't Overwhelm** - effective outreach programs will provide men with complete and concise information in a culturally competent manner.
5. **Get Their Attention with Relevant Themes and Incentives** - African-American men are more likely to attend educational and outreach events when interesting themes and desirable incentives are involved.
6. **Enlist Community Spokespeople, Survivors, and Family Members to Lend Influence** - effective programs mobilize the influence of cancer survivors and their families, prominent national and local African-American men, and African-American women to champion education outreach.
7. **Measure Success Over Time** - effective programs must be highly useful initially, must plan for the number of men reached to grow over time, and must measure success not at one initial event, but rather as growth over time.

To learn more about the ISDH Prostate Cancer Initiative, contact William Thornton at 317-234-2883
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