Alabama Third Time’s The Charm Campaign

Alabama Department of Public Health’s Comprehensive Cancer Control Program and Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program partnered to create the CDC-funded Third Time’s the Charm campaign to educate parents, providers, and young adults about the HPV vaccine.

In 2011 the Alabama Department of Public Health’s (ADPH) Comprehensive Cancer Control Program partnered with its Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program to create a campaign promoting the three-dose HPV vaccination series. ADPH chose HPV because the disease hadn’t been featured in many state efforts since CDC recommended the vaccine for girls in June 2010. The campaign team came up with the name Third Time’s the Charm to emphasize the three doses of the HPV vaccination series.

Funded by CDC’s Comprehensive Cancer Program, the campaign aimed to publicize the HPV vaccination solely as a method of early prevention for cervical cancer, disassociating it from any sexual connotation. All campaign materials therefore avoided any reference to sex, genital warts, and anal and oral cancer. The campaign also wished to address barriers to receiving all three doses of the HPV vaccination and emphasize that all three are needed to effectively protect patients. Finally, the campaign wanted to highlight that dependents up to age 26 may be covered by their parents’ insurance for the HPV vaccination. Since Alabama already requires rising sixth graders to get the Tdap vaccination, which protects against diphtheria, tetanus and whooping cough, the campaign promoted pairing the Tdap vaccine with the HPV vaccine.

Using a collection of carefully constructed print and digital advertisements and campaign materials, the Third Time’s the Charm campaign successfully reduced the stigma associated with HPV and educated providers, young adults, and parents about the importance of the HPV vaccine. Strong interdepartmental relationships and partnerships with other organizations have also greatly helped expand the reach of this campaign.

Steps Taken:

- ADPH purchased coffee sleeves, gas station advertisements, chapsticks, and wallets with the campaign’s logo and distributed them at health fairs and community and sporting events. The agency also created a Facebook campaign, movie theater commercial, YouTube commercial, and several magazine ads to spread the campaign message, gain a public following, and reach parents.
- ADPH reached out to physicians through a mailing with 25 copies of Third Time’s the Charm postcards and a letter recommending that the HPV vaccine be paired with the Tdap vaccine for rising sixth graders. They also used an informational booth at the Alabama Academy of Family Physicians annual meeting.
- ADPH partnered with its communications and design department for the campaign’s creative and graphic design needs, and Alabama Office of Minority Health (OMH), Alabama Office of Women’s Health (OWH), and CDC provided key assistance in helping ADPH distribute educational materials and reach diverse audiences. The campaign was featured in OMH’s quarterly magazine and OWH’s yearly newsletter, which were both distributed statewide.
- ADPH’s strategic partnership with the Alabama Pharmacists Association allowed the agency to mention in campaign materials that the vaccine is available in all Alabama pharmacies. Further,
ADPH collaborated with several university health clinics to explain why they should provide the vaccine and educate students about the importance of receiving the vaccine.

- The campaign worked with REACH, CDC’s program to eliminate racial and ethnic disparities in community health, to distribute educational materials and bookmarks to REACH coordinators and teen educators who work closely with at-risk populations.
- ADPH sends HPV vaccine reminder postcards during the first week of a birthday month to approximately 60,000 11- and 12-year-olds annually. They began working with Televox, a healthcare communications company, to utilize information from ImmPRINT (Alabama’s immunization registry) to send automated messages to parents whose children are in need of the HPV vaccine. ADPH piloted this project in the Choctaw County Health Department, and if it achieves higher vaccination rates, more county health departments will implement this strategy.

Results:
- Although it is difficult to directly attribute increases in vaccination rates to this campaign, ImmPRINT is tracking increases in vaccinations among 11- and 12-year-olds, and results show an increase in the number of physicians who paired the Tdap vaccination with the HPV vaccination.
- Washington Comprehensive Cancer Program, non-profit cancer organization C-Change, and the University of California have all requested campaign materials, emphasizing ADPH’s reach and effectiveness.

Lessons Learned:
- In addition to educating individuals about the HPV vaccination series, you must also give them direct actions to take: people need to know how and where to get these health services.
- The team found that on-campus health clinics generally do not carry the vaccine due to its high cost and end up referring students to local health departments. They subsequently started a campaign to educate college students about the HPV vaccine’s availability in all county health departments (while supplies last) for young adults aged 19-26 whose insurance does not cover vaccine costs.
- The campaign was developed before boys were also recommended to receive the HPV vaccine, and thus campaign advertisements, particularly the magazine ads, were geared to a female audience. Fortunately, the advertisement still appeals to mothers who are encouraged to bring their children in for the HPV vaccine.

For more information:

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