

Marketing Health and Climate Change Messages to your Audiences

[Announcer] This podcast is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC – safer, healthier people.

[Dr. Anderton] Welcome to this edition of CDC's Health Marketing Matters. I'm your host, Dr. John Anderton. Today my guest is Stephen Luce, who works within the National Center for Health Marketing and provides marketing consultation across CDC. Steve, welcome to Health Marketing Matters.

[Stephen Luce] Thank you, Dr. Anderton. It's my pleasure to be here.

[Dr. Anderton] Climate change is a serious public health concern. In fact, climate change and health is the theme for this year's National Public Health Week. What role can health marketing play to positively impact efforts to mitigate climate change and adapt to the health effects of climate change?

[Stephen Luce] It's important to know that communication about climate change today primarily focuses on environmental, economic, and scientific issues. Health is rarely mentioned as a climate change issue. Health marketing can play a large role in getting health included in the discussions on climate change using a scientific, audience-based approach.

[Dr. Anderton] So why hasn't health been discussed with the other effects of climate change?

[Stephen Luce] Although there are many reasons, it's come down to a marketing issue, simply. Americans do not feel that they are vulnerable to the health effects of climate change. What they hear in the media or from other people is that it's an environmental or economic issue, or an issue somewhere else in the world. Even if Americans did think of health as a climate change issue, motivating them to change behaviors that allow them to mitigate climate change or prepare for health effects of climate change would be challenging. There are no perceived direct or immediate benefits to changing that behavior.

An example is vaccinations. We know that vaccinating children and adults helps prevent and control the spread of disease, but getting people to vaccinate is difficult because they see no immediate benefit.

[Dr. Anderton] So what can the public health community do to change this mindset?

[Stephen Luce] In the short-term, the public health community should increase dialogue with anyone and everyone about the health risks of climate change. They should mobilize partners, such as local healthcare providers and faith-based community leaders, on the issue. Public health is uniquely positioned to bring awareness to the effects of climate change on health by humanizing and personalizing climate change by linking climate change with health.

[Dr. Anderton] Who should public health be targeting with messages about health effects of climate change?

[Stephen Luce] Short term, it's important to engage other public health professionals to include climate change in their health discussion. Many in the public health community are not aware, or are just becoming aware of the climate change issue. Public health professionals must utilize good health marketing practice to develop messages specifically for different audiences – state health officials, epidemiologists, managers, and health educators should all find the climate change topic very important - but they need to hear the message specific to their role in the public health system.

Policymakers are another important target audience. Many climate change and energy bills at all levels of government do not include health issues.

[Dr. Anderton] Are there other people that public health professionals should market their health and climate change messages to?

[Stephen Luce] Absolutely. The public health community should take a multi-sector approach. For example, focus on groups who are already working on climate change issues, such as state and local governments, environmental organizations, or climatologists. Traditional and new media groups, such as broadcast meteorologists, journalists, bloggers, and news editors are a powerful channel to carry your message. For example, look to get climate change positioned in health sections of your local newspaper. Influential groups or individuals should also be targeted. Opinion leaders, medical associations, and educators are important. Non-profit organizations are essentially important because they often serve populations who will be the most vulnerable to health effects of climate change. And let's not forget about healthcare providers, health insurance companies, and physicians. Healthcare providers and health insurance companies are a significant part of public health and can help raise awareness and take measures to mitigate climate change and adapt to health effects of climate change. Physicians are trusted sources of information for many Americans and thus could be good messengers to their patients.

[Dr. Anderton] Steve, these are all great recommendations. Are there any other, more non-traditional audiences?

[Stephen Luce] Yes. Partner engagement outside of the traditional sectors is key. Create a dialogue with infrastructure decision-makers, such as urban planners, architects, and members of zoning, city, and transportation planning committees. First responders should be highly receptive to health effect adaptation messages of climate change due to their preparedness mindset. Also, identify and target businesses in your community that are looking to green their business.

[Dr. Anderton] Well, what about the American public, the general public? How can public health professionals market their messages directly to them?

[Stephen Luce] Obviously the public is a critical audience for the entire public health community. Health marketing plays an integral role in getting your marketing messages to the

public effectively. Audience segmentation is a component of this as you can not market the same to all members of the public.

So how do you segment? Well CDC has recognized that certain groups are at a higher risk for health consequences from climate change than others. These groups include: children and the elderly; people of low socioeconomic status; members of racial and ethnic minorities; people living in coastal areas and other flood plains, and in arid regions; and people with certain pre-existing health conditions. This would be a good foundation to build a segmentation strategy. Look for those segments that want to do something about climate change, but don't know what to do or how to do it. Another potential target is people with children or grandchildren who are likely to have a future orientation towards climate change.

[Dr. Anderton] So what are some of the strategies to market to the public health community?

[Stephen Luce] Well first, I would like to stress that any marketing and communication strategy should be supported by good science. Work with scientists and subject matter experts to craft the right messages. You don't want to say or imply something that would exaggerate the science. With the public health community, utilize existing public health frameworks such as the *Ten Essential Public Health Services* and the *Public Health Prevention Framework*. These are good opportunities to market the messages. Using the *Ten Essential Public Health Services*, CDC has identified priority health actions for climate change. One of those health actions is to communicate the health-related aspects of climate change, including risks and ways to reduce them, to the public, decision-makers and health care providers. With the *Prevention Framework*, climate change mitigation can be positioned as a primary prevention activity that aims to prevent the onset of injury or illness. Adaptation to health effects of climate change can be framed as a secondary or tertiary prevention activity which aims to diagnose and control the advancing health effects and reduce resulting injury or illness.

[Dr. Anderton] What are some other strategies that can be used by public health partners to communicate with other partners, the public, and with policymakers?

[Stephen Luce] The strategies should be specific to the audience you are targeting with your message, but there are some good strategies that can be applied to multiple audiences. A co-benefit strategy is effective. That is, many actions addressing climate change yield other benefits for both health and the environment. For example, well-designed, walkable communities not only reduce carbon dioxide emissions, they also reduce air pollution from motor vehicles and promote physical activity. Incorporate adaptation programs for health effects of climate change into existing preparedness planning. Also, make sure to regionalize your marketing and communication activities. Climate change results in health threats and vulnerabilities that are different for different geographic locations. And finally – and perhaps most importantly – personalize the climate change issue. Develop success stories that describe how individuals are implementing solutions personally or for their community. Make climate change and health a relevant, personal, and emotional issue to obtain action from your intended audience. Educating your audiences also works well, but you may not receive the same level of engagement as you would using an emotional-based approach.

[Dr. Anderton] Are there any communications opportunities that public health partners can leverage?

[Stephen Luce] There are several observances and events occurring in 2008. Besides National Public Health Week, observed from April 7th to the 13th, there is also National Environmental Education Week from April 13th to the 19th, Earth Day on April 22nd, and the 2008 Olympics in Beijing, China from August 8th to the 24th. State and local meetings, forums, and seminars are also opportunities to promote health as a climate change issue.

[Dr. Anderton] Any final recommendations for the public health community?

[Stephen Luce] The time is now to market health as a climate change issue. However, with all that we know today, we should still utilize sound public health and health marketing approaches in how we communicate. Research and understand the audiences you are targeting, and make sure you always test those messages for maximum impact and minimal confusion with your intended audience.

[Dr. Anderton] So how can interested persons learn more about health and climate change and how to market it?

[Stephen Luce] I encourage our listeners to visit CDC's new website devoted to the topic at www.cdc.gov/climatechange. Also, visit CDC's partner website at www.cdc.gov/partners.

[Dr. Anderton] Thanks very much, Steve, for talking with us today about health marketing and climate change. I've enjoyed speaking with you.

[Stephen Luce] It was my pleasure, John. Thanks for having me.

[Dr. Anderton] For more information on health marketing, call 1-800-CDC-INFO or visit www.cdc.gov/healthmarketing.

We want to hear your thoughts about this podcast. Please email us at NCHMInfo@cdc.gov. If you have any additional questions or comments about health marketing and climate change that you'd like to share with Steve Luce, our guest today, please contact him at NCHMSuggestions@cdc.gov. Thank you for joining us on Health Marketing Matters.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO, 24/7.