

Abstract Form

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Title of abstract: Understanding cancer literacy levels to improve cancer communications

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Background:

We identified a need to increase our understanding of our audiences' degree of cancer knowledge and their preferences in how we deliver cancer information to them.

This study identified the most appropriate language to use when communicating cancer messages, and will be used to inform messages and campaigns ~~that aim~~ to improve cancer literacy.

Aims:

- To improve cancer communications delivered by the Cancer Institute NSW through researching:
 - Self-evaluation of cancer literacy confidence
 - Cancer literacy confidence by age, demographic, background, affected by cancer vs not affected by cancer
 - External influencers on cancer literacy confidence
 - Current language use and interpretation of cancer terms
 - Preferred language, tone and source of communication
 - Readability
 - the impact of source of communication on literacy confidence
- To understand the impact of cancer literacy confidence on decision making and perceived experience of overall care. We want to further understand how confident people are in their understanding of cancer, how they seek our information, and whether this translates into behaviours/better experiences.

Method:

Hall and Partners were commissioned to conduct a study using a multi-phase research approach incorporating primary and secondary research methodologies including:

- A knowledge/literature review
- 4 HCPs in leadership positions/ educative role regarding cancer
- 20 general population in-depth interviews – (4 people affected by cancer* , 6 not affected)
- 10 cognitive interviews (iterative process to refine survey questionnaire) – (6 people affected by cancer* and 4 people not affected)
- 15 min online survey - N=1,001 participants, representative of adults 18+ in NSW

Results:

The study provided information about levels of cancer literacy, preferences of tone, language style, use of design features, navigation and structuring of information.

The data suggests that at least 20% of people in NSW display difficulties with health and cancer information, that suggest lower levels of cancer literacy.

There was a significant gap between people's awareness of common cancer terms and their understanding of the meaning.

Regardless of health and cancer literacy levels, most affected by cancer describe feeling emotional and overwhelmed at times, which suggests writing in easy-to-understand language.

Results

The study provided evidential support for adopting an approach of always writing for a lower level of health and cancer literacy, due to the size and demographic breadth of the group that exhibits difficulties with cancer information and the understanding that people affected by cancer can find it difficult to absorb information at different stages.

Implications that impact on your project (50 words):

The results have provided a number of recommendations that will be incorporated in the Institute's writing guide and implemented across the organisation. In addition, an accessibility and readability checklist is to be developed to ensure our communications are easy-to-understand for the general population.

* Affected by cancer was defined as you, or any immediate family members or close friends, ever been diagnosed with cancer