Engaging The Public: Reducing The Disease Burden

Reaching At Risk Audiences
USDA/FSIS
Denver, Colorado
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“Prevent, Protect, Live Well”
“......a public health professional is a person educated in public health or a related discipline who is employed to improve health through a population focus”
Public Health’s Contribution To Health

- Public Health is responsible for the greatest increases in the human life span
- Yet it has been “Invisible” to the public
- Its best work is done when nothing happens
- Tragically in CY 2000 78% of Americans believed they had not ever used a public health service*

*Unpublished Survey Hill & Knowlton 2000
Good Public Health Systems Create A Community Benefit

- Based on science
- Reduce morbidity or mortality
- May reduce costs to government
- May reduce costs to community
- Right a wrong
- Benefit may cost money

From CDC Image Library
Operating Environment Has Changed

- Invisible ➔ Visible
- 9-5 Mon - Fri ➔ 24/7
- Results tomorrow ➔ Results now!
- Science & politics ➔ Science & Politics
- Evolving science ➔ Fast science
- Controlled communication ➔ Information overload
- National scope ➔ Global involvement
Change Driven By Highly Visible Public Health Events

- Security Now dominates national agenda
- Public health is part of national security agenda
- Growing public interest in health
- Protection & prevention
After 9/11 Majority of Americans Now Understand They Benefit from Public Health

Would you say you and your community have benefited from public health services?

- 74% Yes
- 19% No
- 7% Don’t Know

Source: Research!America/APHA National Survey, 2004
Harris Interactive for Research!America
Preventable Diseases & Injury Are a Major Health Problem

Are preventable diseases and injuries in this country today a major health problem, a minor health problem or not a health problem?

- 54% Major problem
- 39% Minor problem
- 3% Not a problem
- 4% Don't know

Source: “Taking Our Pulse: The PARADE/Research!America Health Poll” conducted by Charlton Research Company, 2004
The Burden Problem

- Disease burden infinite & without focus
- Leading causes not well understood by many policy makers & public
- Preventable components complex for most & not always linear
- No sense of scale
- Messages often not consistent
### Actual Causes of Premature Death

#### The United States 1990 & 2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cause</th>
<th>Estimated &amp; Percent Total Deaths</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1990 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tobacco</td>
<td>400,000 (19%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diet/Activity patterns</td>
<td>300,000 (14%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol</td>
<td>100,000 (5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Microbial agents</td>
<td>90,000 (4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toxic agents</td>
<td>60,000 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Firearms</td>
<td>35,000 (2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual behavior</td>
<td>30,000 (1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motor vehicles</td>
<td>25,000 (1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illicit use of drugs</td>
<td>20,000 (&lt;1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>1,060,000 (50%)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** McGinnis & Foege, *JAMA* 1993  
(1) & Mokdad et. Al., *JAMA*, 291,10, 2004 (2)  
* Adjusted to 365,000
Public Health’s Communication Problem

- Talk to ourselves
- Listen to ourselves
- Answer our own questions
- Failed to engage critical stakeholders
  - General public
  - Policy makers
  - Business community
Enough Is Enough

- We must change the paradigm
- Time to move to population based health engagement
- Time to more directly engage the public
The Public Is Ready To Be Engaged On Prevention

How important do you think it is for people to do more to prevent their own health problems?

- Very: 86%
- Somewhat: 12%
- Not: 2%

Taking Our Pulse: The PARADE/Research!America Health Poll
Charlton Research Company, 2006
Why Does The Public Care?

- People should be able to be protected from illness or injury when possible & are concerned when something happens
- The cost and personal burden of preventable disease and injury are too much for all of us
- It’s just not right that some groups of Americans are usually sicker than others
- There’s a gap between what is proven to work and what is available and used
2006 E. Coli 0157:H7 Spinach Outbreak*

- 25 states involved
- ~173 sick individuals / 1 death
- Economic loss ~ $100 million
- 3 counties in California being investigated (Salinas Valley)
- Exact mechanism of contamination unknown

From CDC Image Library

*As of September 27, 2006
Annual Morbidity: Food Bourne Disease

- 76 million illness
- 325,000 Hospitalizations
- 5,000 Deaths
- $6.9 billion cost
  - Medical costs
  - Lost productivity
  - Premature death
Produce Food Bourne Disease

Fresh-Cut produce outbreaks (1998 -2005)

- Leaf lettuce 4
- Romaine lettuce 2
- Roma tomatoes 2
- Mixed lettuce 1
  - Spinach 1
  - Tomatoes 1
- Mixed melons 1

From USA Today & FDA 2006
Must Capture Teachable Moments

- Deliver core messages
- Proactive risk communication
- Give clear outbreak messages
- Build public health system
Delivering Core Messages

- Hand washing
- Food separation
- Utensil / board separation
- Appropriate temperature
  - Storage
  - Cooking
- Unpasteurized products have risks
- Some uncooked foods have risks
Proactive Public Risk Communication

- Be informed
- Explain risks clearly
- Reach out
  - Early & often
  - Communicate in their language
  - Variety of media & tools
- Engage the media

From CDC Image Library
Focus Specific Message On Outbreak

- Don’t eat bagged or fresh spinach for now
- OK to eat frozen or canned spinach
- Wash raw fresh fruits or vegetables
- Symptoms of disease
- When to seek health care
Ensure An Effective Public Health System To Respond

- Building infrastructure
  - People
  - Training
  - Tools (e.g. Pulse Net)
  - Resources (money, linkages, facilities)
- Structural reform at local level
- Sufficient investment in public health research
- Strengthening nongovernmental public health
- Sustaining & reforming resource investments
We Must Not Fail !!!!

“If you always do what you always did then......
you’ll always get what you always got”

Moms Mabley
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