

Health Communication to Support HIV Prevention, Testing, and Treatment



RTI International conducts rigorous, multidisciplinary research to promote effective communication, informed decision making, and healthy behaviors. We apply our expertise to design, develop, implement, and evaluate health communication interventions, programs, and campaigns for public agencies, nonprofit organizations, and private-sector entities.

RTI's Health Communication Team

RTI's multidisciplinary research team includes public health, communications, and other social science experts. Our cross-collaborative approach involves reaching within RTI and across our research partners to form expert teams that facilitate a deeper understanding of issues and challenges, foster innovative approaches, and increase client satisfaction.

Our capabilities span the full spectrum of health communication and social marketing, from audience identification and segmentation and formative research to creative message and intervention design, product development, implementation and dissemination across multiple channels, and comprehensive process and outcome evaluation.

Selected Project Experience

Promoting HIV Prevention and Testing Among High-Risk Consumer Audiences and Health Care Providers. RTI is supporting the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in activities directed at increasing awareness and promoting HIV prevention and testing in the United States through the development and implementation of several campaigns targeting both consumer and health care provider audiences. In collaboration with various creative partners, we are

developing campaign concepts and messages; producing campaign ads and materials; planning campaign strategies; and implementing media purchases, community outreach, and digital and social media strategies.

Evaluating HIV Prevention and Testing Social Marketing Campaigns. RTI designs, plans, and conducts a wide range of formative, process, and outcome evaluation activities for CDC's Division of HIV/AIDS Prevention's communication campaigns and partnership activities. Current communication campaigns promote HIV prevention and testing among diverse consumers at high risk for HIV (e.g., men who have sex with men, transgender people, racial and ethnic minorities) and the health care providers who care for them.

Developing, Implementing, and Evaluating UCARE4LIFE. RTI, with funding from the Health Resources and Services Administration, is developing a message library that addresses topics of disease management aimed at increasing medication adherence and primary care retention rates for racial and ethnic minority youth aged 15 to 24 living with HIV. We are also designing, implementing, and evaluating a longitudinal pilot study that delivers text messages to targeted youth receiving care at multiple Ryan White grantee sites. It will employ a rigorous randomized controlled design with clinical and self-reported quantitative and qualitative data.

Developing a Computer-Based Intervention Tool for Persons Living with HIV Attending Routine Primary Care Visits. This project, funded by CDC, aims to develop a computer-based tool to deliver adherence messages to patients and signal important information to providers, a strategy that has shown promise in changing HIV risk and adherence behaviors. These types of interventions facilitate patient-clinician communication and provide patients with highly relevant tailored information.

Developing and Evaluating CDC's HIV Risk Reduction Tool. RTI is working collaboratively with CDC's Prevention Communication Branch to develop a comprehensive online HIV risk reduction tool to communicate accurate information about HIV, HIV risk, and ways to prevent both acquisition and transmission. Our team has developed evidence-based content and messages on over 50 complex topics (e.g., male and female condoms, HIV testing, PrEP, PEP, ART, reducing number of partners, concurrency, serosorting, strategic positioning, negotiated safety, disclosure of status); conducted extensive message and usability testing that has been the foundation for message development; and developed the interactive, web-based tool.

The tool provides tailored, usable, and actionable messages; encourages prevention practices; and provides information on other sexual health topics. The tool will be completed in fall 2015 and evaluated thereafter.

Developing a Voluntary Medical Male Circumcision Demand Creation Toolkit for HIV Prevention. RTI, in collaboration with PSI, developed a toolkit promoting voluntary medical male circumcision in support of PEPFAR HIV/AIDS prevention efforts in eastern and southern Africa. The toolkit provides national and local government program planners, communications personnel, and nongovernmental organizations with a framework for engaging in demand creation activities that address a range of audiences and the use of multiple communication channels.

Message Testing for High Impact Prevention. The goal of high-impact prevention is to combine evidence-based, scalable, and cost-effective interventions (e.g., access to condoms and sterile syringes, access to HIV testing, linkage



to care for persons newly diagnosed, screening for sexually transmitted infections) in ways that reach people most at risk for HIV, including men who have sex with men, Latinos, African Americans, injection drug users, transgender persons, and youths. Our team is currently working with CDC to develop and test messages on new and emerging evidence-based strategies for reducing HIV risk.

The goal of the project is to ensure that messages are understood as intended, are culturally relevant, are acceptable, and provide information that is helpful and actionable while also guarding against unintended consequences such as perpetuating stigma of certain groups or behaviors. This project provides a mechanism to systematically and routinely test core messages that can be integrated into various CDC communications (e.g., fact sheets, information on CDC websites, or in campaigns or interventions). RTI qualitatively and quantitatively tests HIV messages with various audiences.

More Information

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