

In the Game of Life Every Shot Counts

Marion County Public Health Department

Laura Patterson, BA

Kirk Forbes, MBA

In the Game of Life Every Shot Counts

Background: Many people rely on heuristic reasoning to determine the potential risks and/or benefits of a particular course of action. Heuristic reasoning utilizes mental inventories of recalled experiences for decision making; giving special weight to perceived authorities, while steering clear of options that could improve their situation but that also involve the potential to make them worse off than they are at present. A 1979 study revealed the tendency of these individuals to selectively credit and dismiss information in a manner that confirms their prior beliefs.

After evaluating the data, we tailored our project by putting a “face” on cervical cancer. Our partnership advocates for HPV vaccination by highlighting the unsuccessful fight of 23-year-old, Kristen Forbes, against cervical cancer. Our goal is to improve Marion County’s Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) immunization rates to 50% by the end of 2013.

Setting: According to the “2011 National & State Vaccination Coverage Among Adolescents Aged 13 Through 17 Years in the US”, the percentage of girls receiving at least 1 dose of HPV vaccine in Indiana is 37%. Only three other states have lower HPV vaccination rates.

Population: Marion County has a population of approximately 903,393 (2010 census).

Project Description: According to the findings of a study conducted in Tokyo; “A mother’s impulse to love and protect her child appears to be hard-wired into her brain” (NY Times, 2-8-2012). We tell the tragic story of a 23 year-old daughter, who was diagnosed with cervical cancer one month after graduating from college. Eleven months later, Kristen died.

We are not promoting a “vaccine against cancer:” as many stop listening when hearing the word “vaccine”. Instead we tell a heartbreaking story of every parent’s worst fear – the death of their child. Knowing there is a way to protect them, the decision on whether to immunize their children may elicit a starkly different response. We have utilized modern technology to promote our message: Public Service Announcements (PSAs), YouTube, electronic newsletters, Pre-movie promotions in theaters, websites and Twitter. Notwithstanding, we employed the more traditional media such as: banners, posters, public address, celebrity endorsement (Indiana Fever), and television interviews.

Results/Lessons Learned: Our collaboration has improved the public’s awareness of HPV through the utilization of public forums, testimony to CDC and at the 2nd Annual Healthcare Summit in Washington DC (Women in Government) as well as a presence in conjunction with Super Bowl XLVI in Indianapolis.