Use of Social Marketing During GYT: Get Yourself Tested Campaign to Increase Chlamydia trachomatis Screening via an Internet Recruitment

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Internet recruitment for self-collected urogenital samples at home for chlamydia testing has been used previously. We hypothesized that the use of social marketing techniques would increase numbers of persons screened in this program.

Objectives
To increase the number of Internet recruited women and men ages 15-25 years who are screened for chlamydia in Maryland and DC during the GYT campaign for the month of April 2011 (CDC’s STD Awareness Month), and the following months.

Methods
We incorporated multiple methods of social marketing: a QR barcode to provide smart-phone-friendly access to the www.iwantthekit.org (IWTK) order page for the kit; text messaging for ordering kits; advertising on Facebook and “OKCupid”, a teen dating website; advertising in high schools, colleges, and STD clinics; radio advertisements; and online and print ads in free daily/weekly newspapers, which preview weekend events in Baltimore and Maryland. We monitored kit requests, kit returns, and website hits.

Results
Kit requests went from a low of 101 ordered in January to a high of 669 ordered in April. Kits returned for testing went from a low of 54 in January to an average of 177/month in the months following social marketing (April-120, May-205, June-206). Website hits went from a low of 89,771 in January to a high of 184,556 in April.

Positivity did not appear to increase, but total numbers of positives did increase due to more persons being tested.

Conclusions
- The successful use of social marketing techniques appeared to increase testing via Internet recruitment as website hits, kit requests, and kits returned for testing all increased during the period of the GYT campaign.
- Social marketing reaches targeted audiences and can increase chlamydia (and other STD) awareness and screening services. More study is required to independently assess the most cost-effective methods to increase screening for chlamydia.

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