



Health
Canada Santé
Canada

Flu Season Vaccine Creative Testing

Executive Summary

Prepared for Health Canada

Prepared by Narrative Research
PSPC Contract Number: CW2241323
Contracted Value: \$74,082.80
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For more information, please contact: cpab_por-rop_dgcap@hc-sc.gc.ca

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Supplier Name: Narrative Research

November 2022

This public opinion research report presents the results of focus groups conducted by Narrative Research on behalf of Health Canada. The research entailed a total of fifteen online focus groups with members of the general public (5 sessions), parents of children less than five years old or pregnant people (5 sessions) and people living with chronic health conditions (5 sessions) in targeted communities located in each of five regions: British Columbia/Yukon, Prairies/Northwest Territories, Ontario/Nunavut, Quebec and Atlantic. Sessions included a mix of gender, ages, cultural backgrounds and Indigenous representation. The Quebec sessions were conducted in French while all other discussions were held in English. The research was conducted between October 17 and 20, 2022.

Cette publication est aussi disponible en français sous le titre :
Test créatif de la campagne sur la grippe saisonnière

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Narrative Research Inc.

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Contract Award Date: 2022-10-03

Contracted Cost: \$74,082.80

Background and Research Methodology

Influenza, also known as the flu, is one of the leading causes of death in Canada with peaks of activities in the fall and winter months. While preventative measures are desirable to minimize the spread of the virus, yearly vaccination remains one of the most impactful measures to prevent the flu, with fall being the ultimate time to receive the shot. In this context, Health Canada developed its 2022-2023 Seasonal Flu Vaccine Awareness Campaign scheduled to be launched in the fall of 2022. The goal of the campaign is to increase awareness that at-risk populations are more at risk for complications from the flu, that people in close contact with at-risk populations can also protect themselves and at-risk populations by getting an annual flu shot. Targeted audiences more at risk of serious complications resulting from flu infection include adults over 65 years old, people living with chronic health conditions, children under 5 years old, and people who are pregnant. Prior to finalizing the campaign's creative approach, Health Canada was interested in testing reactions to three concepts, with the goal of informing the development of the final creative.

The purpose of the research was to evaluate the three potential concepts to determine if the content is:

- Clearly understood by the intended audiences;
- Credible, relevant and of value to the audiences;
- Appealing and appropriate to the audiences;
- Memorable; and
- Able to motivate the audiences to take the intended action.

In addition, the research was designed to:

- Compare the campaign concepts to select the best language, graphics, key messages and tone for the target audiences;
- Prompt suggestions for potential changes/improvements to ensure the intended message is received;
- Determine if the audience that is more at risk for serious flu complications understands that they are at a higher risk; and
- Help identify preferred sources and methods of receiving information on the seasonal flu from the Government of Canada.



The results of this study will be used to help Health Canada make a decision concerning the final creative concept for their 2022 seasonal flu campaign. The three creative concepts yielded helpful feedback among participants which ultimately resulted in a clear choice for top concept.

To achieve these objectives, a qualitative research approach was undertaken. This included a total of 15 online focus groups conducted between October 17 – 20, 2022 in specific communities located across five regions: British Columbia/Yukon, Prairies/Northwest Territories, Ontario/Nunavut, Quebec, and Atlantic Canada. In each region, one focus group was conducted with members of the general public, one group was conducted with parents of children less than five years old or pregnant people, and one group was conducted with people living with chronic health conditions.

Each session lasted approximately 90 minutes. Twelve sessions were conducted in English and the three in Quebec were conducted in French. Participants in the general public groups were provided an incentive of \$100 and those in the parents/pregnant groups or the chronic health conditions groups were provided an incentive of \$125. Across all groups, a total of 120 individuals were recruited and 104 participated. One additional participant was unable to take part in the session due to technical difficulty, but was provided with an incentive, as is normal practice.

All participants were recruited per the recruitment specifications for the Government of Canada. Recruitment was conducted through qualitative panels stored on Canadian servers, with follow up calls to confirm the details provided and to ensure quotas were met.

This report presents the findings from the study. Caution must be exercised when interpreting the results from this study, as qualitative research is intended to be directional only. Results cannot be attributed to the overall population under study, with any degree of confidence.

Political Neutrality Certification

I hereby certify as a Representative of Narrative Research that the deliverables fully comply with the Government of Canada political neutrality requirements outlined in the Directive on the Management of Communications. Specifically, the deliverables do not include information on electoral voting intentions, political party preferences, standings with the electorate or ratings of the performance of a political party or its leaders.

Signed _____


Margaret Brigley, CEO & Partner | Narrative Research

Date: November 21, 2022

Key Findings

During the focus groups, participants were presented with three concepts that each included four (five in one case) animated website banners, each presented in draft format as a series of still images. Each concept was presented and discussed one at a time, with the presentation order rotated across groups to



minimize any presentation bias. An individual poll collecting overall reactions on the concept’s memorability, credibility, call to action, and its ability to capture attention was administered after the creative was shown, and before the group discussion. Following the discussion of all three concepts, participants were asked to choose which one is most likely to convince them to get the seasonal flu shot this year. The following summarizes the key findings from the *Flu Season Vaccine Creative Testing* research study.

Overall Reactions and Preferences

There is appreciation for an awareness campaign to remind the public about the flu vaccine and encourage at-risk populations to get the seasonal flu shot to help protect themselves from flu-related complications.

In terms of the creative approach, on average, Concept A performed better than either Concept B or C, notably in the general population and chronic health conditions groups. Concept A was generally preferred for its graphic appeal, the clarity of its message, and because the call to action is strongly suggestive while being not too forceful. That said, participants in the parents/pregnant people groups generally preferred Concept B for having a less forceful tone and for presenting the flu vaccine as one of the components to a healthy lifestyle.

Reactions to Concept A

Regardless of preferences, overall reactions to Concept A were mostly positive, notably for the message of civic duty, the overall visual appeal, and the rationale for targeting some groups. Some liked how this version explained why these target audiences are more at risk and why the flu shot is important, which lends credibility to the message.

Both the visuals and the tagline (‘get the flu shot for you and me’) effectively conveyed the invitation to get vaccinated in a clear and concise manner. The graphic presentation was felt to clearly communicate the intended message, especially with its impactful infographic on the last frame. In addition, showing the image of an individual throughout the ad (i.e. on each frame) helps grab attention and contributes to the concept’s overall appeal.

The tone was felt to be empathetic and encouraging, although too overly happy to align with the seriousness of the seasonal flu topic. Moreover, a handful of participants noted that there is fatigue with the “for you and for me” messaging that has been repeatedly heard in the context of the promotion of the





COVID-19 public health measures. It should be noted that many participants in the parents/pregnant people sessions found the tone too forceful or directive, notably in the use of the verb “get” in the tagline.

Mention of “for you and me” in the tagline, combined with explaining the risk of flu complication experienced by at-risk groups, helped convey a broader appeal, with the target audience being seen as everyone. Ethnic diversity is well represented in this concept and contributes to the broader appeal. The first-person narrative was also well received as it felt more personal and relatable, even among those not in the at-risk groups.

Reactions to Concept B

By contrast, Concept B elicited mixed reactions, although it was well received by those in the parents/pregnant people groups and some of those in the chronic health conditions groups who appreciated the presentation of the flu vaccine as one way of many to remain healthy, rather than the only way. Using the flu vaccine as a tool to protect people in at-risk groups and inviting people to “help those people-children-pregnant” to live a healthy life resonated with many, although many others felt that the call to action was too weak.

The tone of Concept B was considered to be happy and relaxing, in addition to being seen as empowering by some by using positive and calm lifestyle images, and a less forceful approach to presenting the flu vaccine. The target for the concept was considered to be primarily those in the at-risk groups, and to a lesser extent, those around them. The manner in which the concept presents the flu vaccine as one of the many strategies, or ways, someone in the at-risk group can use to ensure a healthy lifestyle implied that they were the campaign’s target audiences. However, the concept does not effectively encourage getting the flu vaccine for a wider audience.



Reactions to Concept C

Concept C was polarizing, with many participants reacting strongly and negatively to the mask imagery used. This concept elicited mixed and strong reactions, and it presents serious risks in terms of message confusion and dismissal. Concerns were expressed with presenting the flu vaccine as more important this year because of the pandemic, which also led many to question the message’s credibility.



At the same time, some participants indicated that due to hearing similar messages during the pandemic, they may dismiss or ignore the campaign. Some participants recognized that masks are very controversial and have never been associated with the seasonal flu in the past. All together, the concept was memorable for many, but for primarily negative reasons.

The tone of Concept C was felt to be forceful and one that elicits shame. Terms such as “bossy”, “demanding” and “guilting” were used to describe the tone and some felt like it was intended to shame (or blame those no longer wearing masks). Due to the last few years of the COVID-19 pandemic, a few participants mistrust government messages concerning public health and are tired of hearing about masking.

From a graphic standpoint, the images of people used in Concept C were felt to be appropriate and related to the subject, but as noted the mask brought out polarization among participants. There was, however, a consensus that the frames were text heavy which may deter many from reading the ads. On a positive note, there is good colour and text contrast throughout the banners, making the ads attractive and easy to read. That said, the call to action in Concept C was found to lack credibility. While the concept is viewed as a clear invitation to get the flu shot, the call to action is weakened by the message’s lack of credibility or dismissed due to negative reactions mentions of masking.

