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Dementia Public Education Phase 2 – Creative Concept Testing Prevention

Executive Summary

Prepared for the Public Health Agency of Canada

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Ce rapport est aussi disponible en français.

Dementia Public Education Phase 2 – Creative Concept Testing Prevention Final Report

Prepared for the Public Health Agency of Canada
Supplier name: Phoenix Strategic Perspectives Inc.
February 2023

This public opinion research report presents the results of 11 online focus groups conducted with Canadian adults, aged 25 and older, who have lifestyle habits that may increase their risk of dementia, or who are living with or prone to chronic health conditions. Three sessions were conducted in Ontario and two sessions were conducted in each of the following regions: Atlantic Canada, Quebec (in French), the Prairies and British Columbia. The research was conducted November 7 through 15, 2022.

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Executive Summary

Phoenix Strategic Perspectives (Phoenix SPI) conduct qualitative public opinion research (POR) on behalf of the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) to test creative concepts focussed on preventing dementia.

1. Research purpose and objectives

According to PHAC's most recent surveillance data¹, almost 452,000 Canadians aged 65 years and older are living with diagnosed dementia, two-thirds of whom are women. While there is no cure for dementia, several studies suggest that applying healthy lifestyle behaviours and modifying certain risk factors can delay or lower the chances of developing dementia. Modifiable dementia risk factors are ones that can be controlled by taking action. Actions include staying active, eating a healthy balanced diet, avoiding smoking, limiting alcohol consumption, protecting oneself from hearing loss and head injury, managing chronic health conditions, such as diabetes and high blood pressure, socializing regularly, and keeping one's brain active.

The purpose of this qualitative research was to assess creative concepts developed to focus on risk factors and promote healthy lifestyle behaviours. The objectives were to: 1) evaluate each of the creative concepts and determine if the content is relevant to each audience, clearly understood, motivating, and creatively appealing to the audience; 2) elicit suggestions for potential changes to ensure the message(s) and ad(s) resonate with the target audience; and 3) elicit insights from audience groups relevant to designing future creative concepts and supporting materials. The results will be used by PHAC to guide messaging and creative development of the dementia advertising campaign.

2. Methodology

To meet the objectives, 11 virtual focus groups were conducted with Canadian adults aged 25 and older who have lifestyle habits that may increase their risk of dementia, or who are living with or prone to chronic health conditions. Three sessions were conducted in Ontario and two sessions were conducted in each of the following regions: Atlantic Canada, Quebec (in French), the Prairies and British Columbia. Participants received an honorarium of \$100. The research was conducted November 7 through 15, 2022.

3. Highlights

Dementia is routinely associated with memory loss and the elderly. Genetics/hereditary factors topped the list of perceived risk factors for dementia. Various actions perceived as ways to minimize risk of dementia.

Participants had no difficulty identifying what comes to mind when they hear the term dementia. The two things identified most often were memory loss and forgetfulness as well as aging and the elderly. Several risk factors for developing dementia were identified by participants, but genetics or hereditary factors were the most frequently identified factor. Other factors included aging, lifestyle (e.g., diet, lack of physical activity, smoking, substance use), environmental factors (e.g., pollution, plastics, ingredients in foods), stress, lack of mental stimulation, medications and medical conditions, viruses and illnesses, and brain injury. Actions participants thought *might* minimize the

¹ Data from 2016-17.

risk of developing dementia included keeping one's mind active or stimulated (e.g., by doing puzzles/playing word games), engaging in social activities, and incorporating exercise and a healthy diet into one's routine.

Widespread impression that all three concepts provide clear and credible messaging. Concept B (Stats and graphs) and concept C (Unexpected impact), however, were liked by more participants than concept A (Get to know your risk factors).

There was widespread agreement that each of the three creative concepts provides a message that is clear and easy to understand as well as credible. Few felt there was missing information in the creative concepts, and many said the creative concepts are personally relevant. Participants most often identified the extent to which high blood pressure and physical inactivity can increase the risk of dementia (60% and 40% respectively) as new or surprising information.² Although each of the three concepts effectively communicates information, concept B (Stats and graphs), and concept C (Unexpected impact) were liked by more participants than concept A (Get to know your risk factors).

Concept B (Stats and graphs) was judged to be the most effective both in terms of capturing attention and motivating participants to want to follow up.

When participants were asked to compare the three conceptual approaches, concept B emerged as the most effective both in terms of capturing attention and motivating participants to want to follow up to learn more or possibly take some action. Indeed, it was preferred by more than twice as many participants when compared to concept A and concept C.

The most frequently given reason for liking this approach was the way in which it presents or displays data. Expressions used by participants to describe this included 'creative', 'clever', 'attention-grabbing', 'captivating', 'memorable', 'sobering', and 'powerful'. Such reactions were most likely to be made in relation to the physical inactivity version of the approach, with many participants singling-out the pie chart overlaid on the recliner as a clever design element. This was also the main reason why concept B was viewed as most effective. Participants liked its use of graphs and its focus on percentages, with the former often described as highlighting and drawing attention to the latter.

Reaction to the genetic link line tends to be positive, but the additional information has limited additional motivational power.

Almost all participants said they noticed the additional 'genetic link' line in the revised storyboard and poster/static ad. Well over half the participants described the additional information on genetics as making the message more effective. While most participants think that the additional information strengthens the message, most also indicated that it has no more motivational power for them personally than the versions without the genetic link.

² Participants were much more likely to identify this as new/surprising information in reaction to the *first* creative concept they were shown. In other words, the likelihood of identifying this as new information had more to do with the order of presentation of concepts than with the concepts themselves.

4. Limitations and use of the findings

The results from the virtual focus groups cannot be quantified or generalized to the full population of Canadians aged 25 and older who are at greater risk of dementia due to lifestyle habits or to chronic health conditions. They do offer a range of detailed opinions about the issues explored through this research. These results must not be used to estimate the numeric proportion or number of individuals in the population who hold a particular opinion because they are not statistically projectable. As such, the results will be used by the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) to guide messaging and creative development of the dementia advertising campaign with the objective to educate Canadians about dementia risk factors, to increase uptake of preventative actions to ultimately reduce dementia in Canada.

5. Contract value

The contract value was \$61,940.17 (including applicable taxes).

6. Statement of political neutrality

I hereby certify as a Senior Officer of Phoenix Strategic Perspectives that the deliverables fully comply with the Government of Canada political neutrality requirements outlined in the *Communications Policy* of the Government of Canada and Procedures for Planning and Contracting Public Opinion Research. Specifically, the deliverables do not contain any reference to electoral voting intentions, political party preferences, standings with the electorate, or ratings of the performance of a political party or its leader.



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