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## Workplace safety: A review of best practice for mass media campaigns

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### Work-related injuries and mass media

- 640,700 workers experience a work-related injury/illness in Australia each year
- 375 killed as a result of work-related injuries in Australia each year
- Mass media campaigns
  - potentially alter knowledge or attitudes of large proportion of population
  - provide support for behaviour change



## Study aims

- Improve evidence base for conducting effective WHS mass media campaigns
- Summarise the current state of knowledge regarding best practice for WHS mass media campaigns



## Method



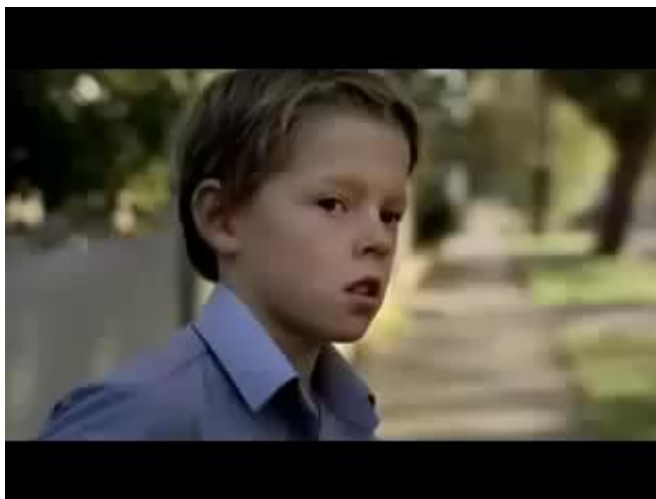
- Industry review
  - Interviews with WHS communications managers in Australia (SA, NSW, Vic, Tas), Canada, UK, New Zealand
    - Role of mass media in promoting WHS
    - Description of recent campaigns
    - Perceptions of what works and what doesn't work in campaigns
- Literature review
  - Australian & international public health literature (2001-2010)
    - New issues regarding campaign development (e.g. message content, appeal & delivery)
    - Efficacy of threat appeals & alternatives
    - Evaluations of WHS mass media campaigns

## Results – Industry review



- Realistic expectations for mass media. Used for agenda setting & raising awareness of broad WHS issues, minor role in changing behaviour.
- Tactical/targeted activities preferred for communicating specific messages for specific groups/industries.
- Decision to use mass media dependent on type of message, size of target audience, resources available.

## Work Safe (Vic) - “Homecomings”



## Literature review - Campaign development

- Use a psychological theory as a conceptual base for the campaign (e.g. Transtheoretical Model of Change).
- Clearly define campaign objectives, select appropriate variables to measure if objectives achieved.
- Identify target audience then tailor message and communication channels to their motivations and preferences.
- Combine different forms of media to reach target audience.

## Campaign development...

- Integrate mass media with other activities (e.g. education, enforcement, community engagement).
- Messages need to make explicit behavioural recommendations relating to work context.
- Provide sufficient resources to reach target audience and sustain appropriate exposure to campaign.



## Mass media campaigns for back pain

- “*Back pain. Don’t take it lying down*” (Victoria). US\$7.6m 3yrs. (TV, radio, outdoor, info to GP’s) 15% decline in back pain claims, beliefs more positive - sustained 4yrs after.
  - Scotland (radio, info for health prof, no work message) Change in attitudes only.
  - Norway (small scale, local) Small change in beliefs only.
  - Canada (radio, no work messages) Small change in beliefs only.



## Threat appeals

- Research on effectiveness of threat appeals is inconclusive
- Specific conditions for fear appeal to have an impact:
  1. Describe a threat (severity & susceptibility)
  2. Suggest a safe behaviour to cope with threat (perceived effective, easy to perform)
  3. Increase confidence in target audience ability to successfully perform the safe behaviour



## Threat appeals

- Threat reduction  
E.g. Health & Safety  
Executive UK,  
“*Shattered Lives*”



## Threat appeals



- May be **counterproductive** if believe unable to protect selves from threat, resulting in defensive responses (e.g. avoidance, denial, reactance)
- Impact least on those most in need of changing behaviour (e.g. young males)
- **Recommendation: Consider other appeals**

## Alternatives – Humour

- Positive emotional appeals (e.g. humour) may also need to include messages that provide effective and useful coping strategies.
- E.g. Anti-smoking campaign, UK (mid 1990's) - John Cleese



*"Let me show you how much ash a 20 a day smoker makes – of course, not all are cremated"*

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## Humour – Road safety



*"Pinkie"*, RTA, NSW



*"Blazed"*, NZ Transport Agency



*"Matemorphosis"*, MAC, SA

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## Humour – Rail safety

- “*Dumb ways to die*”, Metro Trains, Victoria (Nov 2012)



## Evaluations of WHS campaigns



- Few evaluations ( $n=10$ )
  - variation in quality
  - effectiveness measured by changes in awareness, attitudes, behavioural intentions – few used objective behaviour
  - most integrated mass media with other activities
- Evaluations should be based on before & after comparisons of work-related variables that are objectively observed & closely linked to workplace safety.





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