This publication summarises findings from research conducted by Ian Murdoch and Helen Baker, Institute of Ophthalmology, Moorfields Hospital.

Glaucoma is the main cause of preventable blindness in older people in the UK. Strongly age-related, it results in a progressive, irreversible loss of the field of vision. Studies have indicated that there is a lack of awareness of glaucoma among the public generally. Although the use of mass media in health promotion has shown that it can be used effectively within certain areas, there is little data on public attitudes towards eye health in the UK. The Glaucoma Research Unit at Moorfields Eye Hospital carried out a pilot study to examine the usefulness of a health education package on the Isle of Wight and in Southall, Ealing with funding from Thomas Pocklington Trust. It was a preliminary part of a larger intervention study to investigate the effects of a health promotion campaign.

This study found that:

- in both areas the campaign had an effect on raising awareness of glaucoma
- to change people’s behaviour, mass media would need to be used alongside other health promotional methods
- further research is required to determine the best method of reaching a target population through radio
- this pilot study is an invaluable basis for a larger study.
Glaucoma

Primary open-angle glaucoma affects 1-2% of people over 40 years of age in Caucasian and Indian populations. It is largely asymptomatic until the late stages, and patients with suspect glaucoma do not realise the importance of diagnosis or the need for further evaluation.

Studies have indicated there is a poor level of knowledge within the public generally and lack of awareness. Attitudes towards health issues in the immigrant population appear to result in delays in seeking help for visual impairment.

In the developed world only 50% of those with Glaucoma are diagnosed and receiving therapy.

Introduction

The aim of the study was to assess whether a public health package on glaucoma reaches its target population. The target population was people aged 45 and above resident on the Isle of Wight or in Southall, Ealing. Both areas had a single radio station for the community, local press and an established community network.

The Isle of Wight is a mainly Caucasian population with an age bias towards older people. Southall is a multicultural, diverse urban population with a substantial number of Indian origin.

Ethical approval for the study was obtained from Moorfields Eye Hospital Ethical Committee and the Isle of Wight, Portsmouth & South East Hants Local Research Ethics Committee.

Method

The Health Intervention consisted of two parts: an interview on local radio and an advert in the local paper. When designing the advertisement for the paper it was essential that it was relevant to the target population and conveyed simple information in a new and emotive manner.

The method was as follows:

- Review previous and current glaucoma advertisements
- Brainstorm and design 6 prototype adverts
Discuss adverts with eye health specialists: glaucoma doctors, nurses, optometrists and orthoptists

Redesign adverts

Discuss adverts with glaucoma patients

Select three adverts and translate into Hindi

Choose advert for Southall, as a result of feedback from focus groups within the target population

Discuss the three adverts with Isle of Wight residents from the target population

Select advert for the Isle of Wight.

The adverts were different for each location, because it was important to get the right advert for each area. At each location the target population was asked to comment on different logos that could be associated with the advert to increase its impact. They were also asked if they read the local paper and listened to the local radio.

Trailers containing information about glaucoma and advertising the interview were aired for three days before the actual interview.

A Hindi-speaking glaucoma associate specialist doctor carried out the interview in Southall. A consultant ophthalmologist specialising in glaucoma carried out the interviews on the Isle of Wight. Although the interviews did not follow a set format, they conveyed the same key issues. A questionnaire was developed to be carried out before and after the advertising campaign.

A baseline questionnaire was used to establish the proportion of individuals who would still be responders even in the absence of a true campaign.

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1 Orthoptists investigate, diagnose and treat defects of binocular vision and abnormalities of eye movement for patients of all ages from infants to older people.
A further short questionnaire was then completed after the intervention to establish the impact of the campaign. This questionnaire was very straightforward: it asked the respondents if they had heard of glaucoma, if so where and when? And if they had not, whether they had heard of other eye diseases, and if so where and when? The questionnaire also asked whether the respondent had seen the advert and heard the radio interview and finished with basic data on age, occupation, sex and ethnicity.

In Southall the advert chosen for the local paper included the NHS logo. The local focus group felt this would add impact to the advertisement, as they associated the logo with free treatment. However the advertisement chosen for the Isle of Wight had no logo, as the target population felt that it would not be relevant to the Island. Both radio adverts were based on the newspaper advert for each area and from the discussions with each target population.

**Results of the study**

**Southall:**

- Local residents in Southall all reported reading the local paper and listening to the radio. The team interviewed 190 adults before the intervention and 298 were interviewed after the intervention (excluding those classed as too young). On the whole, a younger group was interviewed prior to the intervention and a higher proportion of Africans were also included in the sample prior to the intervention. The difference in the number of people interviewed was due to limitations on data collection at the start of the study.

- Those who said they had seen the advert went from 4% before to 27% after: an increase of 23%, which is highly significant. Those who said they had heard the radio went from 7% before to 20% after: an increase of 17%, also highly significant. Those who had heard of glaucoma rose from 27% to 40%: a rise of 13%. Because there were age and ethnic differences in the samples as explained above, it was important that the results were reviewed in age specific and ethnic specific groups. A consistent effect was seen across all the groups.
Isle of Wight:

- On the Isle of Wight local residents all reported reading the local newspaper the County Press, but only 50% reported listening to the local radio. The team interviewed 304 people before the intervention and 312 people after the intervention (excluding any classed as too young). There were no significant differences between the two samples on the Isle of Wight. Those who said they had seen the advert went from 9% before to 18% after: an increase of 9%, which was significant. Those who said they had heard the radio proved not to be significant only increasing by 1%. Those who had heard of glaucoma rose from 71% to 79%.

Discussion of results

The impact of the campaign was most significant in Southall, with a higher proportion of individuals reporting seeing the advert, hearing the interview and having heard of glaucoma after the intervention. On the Isle of Wight there were similar results in terms of the impact of the advert and awareness of glaucoma but there was no effect regarding the radio interview as such a small proportion actually heard this.

Interestingly 71% of those interviewed at the beginning of the study on the Isle of Wight had already heard of glaucoma, in contrast to Southall where it was only 27%. Despite this limitation the study clearly still demonstrates an effect on the Isle of Wight.

In Southall the radio interview showed an effect. Prior to the interviews, preliminary work indicated that everyone in Southall listened to the radio, but only 50% on the Isle of Wight. This may account for a smaller effect on the Isle of Wight; however there must be other contributing factors. This would indicate that further research is required to determine the best method of reaching a target population through radio. Other media may need to be considered.

In many studies some people respond positively to interviews that have not yet taken place. In Southall between 4-7% of those interviewed responded positively about the effect of interviews and adverts that had not actually taken place yet. On the Isle of Wight it was 2-9%. This phenomenon is often experienced in similar studies. Despite this, in both areas the...
study clearly resulted in a significant increase in the numbers having heard of glaucoma. This could be attributed to both the advert and interview in Southall and to the interview alone on the Isle of Wight.

**Conclusions**

The impact of advertising campaigns in the two areas varied due to significant differences in the population. However in both areas the researchers were able to demonstrate that the campaign had an effect on raising awareness of glaucoma.

In this study the media was used to sell the health message (known as social marketing). Whilst the message on its own raised awareness, it was unlikely to influence health-seeking behaviour. To change people’s behaviour, mass media would need to be used alongside other health promotional methods such as community development and interpersonal interaction.

This pilot study has been invaluable for the main study, showing a positive result, and will play a crucial part in the development of a targeted health promotion campaign.

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**How to get further information**

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Background on Pocklington

Thomas Pocklington Trust is the leading provider of housing, care and support services for people with sight loss in the UK. Each year we also commit around £600,000 to fund social and public health research and development projects.

Pocklington’s operations offer a range of sheltered and supported housing, residential care, respite care, day services, home care services, resource centres and community based support services.

A Positive about Disability and an Investor in People organisation, we are adopting quality assurance systems for all our services to ensure we not only maintain our quality standards, but also seek continuous improvement in line with the changing needs and expectations of our current and future service users.

We are working in partnership with local authorities, registered social landlords and other voluntary organisations to expand our range of services.

Our research and development programme aims to identify practical ways to improve the lives of people with sight loss, by improving social inclusion, independence and quality of life, improving and developing service outcomes as well as focusing on public health issues.

We are also applying our research findings by way of pilot service developments to test new service models and develop best practice.