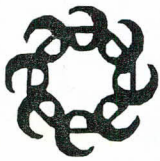


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MEMORANDUM

Date:	July 13, 2000
To:	Billie-Jo Bogden Communications Planning and Research Division Communications and Consultation Directorate Health Canada
Concerning:	Final Report on Health Care Advertisement Focus Groups
From:	EKOS Research Associates Inc.

- **Four groups held April 4**
 - Two in Toronto, two in Peterborough
 - One group in each location was made of participants who had personally used or taken a family member to use the health care system at least three times in the last 12 months and one included participants who had not personally used or taken a family member to use the health care system in the last 12 months.

- **Three products tested:**
 - Two storyboard concepts for TV ad ("puzzle" and "pills")
 - Householder/brochure
 - Newspaper ad

1 BOTTOM LINE

- Groups largely in line with earlier qualitative findings: strong preference for cooperation, explaining plan, focus on “the real issues”. Conversely, focus on “numbers’ game” and perception of laying of blame is alienating.
- Groups did, however, seem to have lower awareness of Ontario campaign — uncertain whether this is by chance (small number of participants/non-representative methodology) or constitutes an abatement in absorption of Ontario message. Next wave of quantitative will determine the true lay of the land.
- In this environment (i.e. lower awareness), some of the messages (particularly those which explicitly countered Ontario messages) missed the mark with participants.
- “Puzzle” ad clearly best of the TV options.
- Newspaper ad not resonant, seen as focussing on “all the wrong things”.
- Householder/brochure generally favourably received.

2 TV CONCEPTS

2.1 “Pills” Ad

- Mixed reaction to images:
 - Some felt the stark colour was “different from what we usually see on commercials” and therefore eye-catching. Others simply suggested that image of pills was either unoriginal “as emulation of Ontario commercial” or presented a negative/confusing image — “is it a ‘say no to drugs’ ad?”
- Prescription pad a positive image for some “it’s their prescription, it’s a plan” less so for others.
- Overall tone seen as aggressive and not appreciated.
 - “It’s a counter attack”.
- Because the focus was seen as being on the financial aspects of health care, the call for “a commitment from all our provinces and territories to work together” was seen by some as the Government of Canada demanding greater funding commitments from the provinces/territories.
- The direct targeting of the discrepancy between views on funding levels led some to conclude “no one knows what’s going on”.

- Ultimately the ad was not seen as having a clear, concise message that participants could appreciate.

2.2 Puzzle Ad

- While a small amount of scepticism was expressed vis-à-vis the imagery (“they’re trying to manipulate us with a happy kid”) the images generally evoked positive messages:
 - “they’re building something, building a better health care system”
 - “If a child can accomplish a task like the puzzle then governments can accomplish their task – fixing health care”
 - “It’s national ... health care for the whole country”
- The inclusion of the potential elements of the plan (i.e., better access to doctors, improved home/community care, advanced technologies) as part of the voice-over likely gets the message (and for most it is the key message) across more directly than including these as on-screen elements of “prescription”.
- The voice-over text was described as “clear” and “concise” and evoked no sentiment of “defending a position”

3 NEWSPAPER AD

- Tested quite poorly. Three elements stood out as particularly troubling:
 - A perceived discordance between the opening statement “The Ontario Government would have you believe...” and the closing statement: “we’re here to fix health care, not lay blame.” — “They’re blaming Ontario then saying they’re not ... it’s dishonest.”
 - Related to this discordance was the generally negative reaction to what is perceived as inter-jurisdictional arguing – “I’m so fed up with governments fighting with each other, it’s a waste of time and money”
 - The various figures included — “34 cents per dollar”, “55 per cent of last year’s Ontario health increase” and the footnote. Participants were sceptical of the numbers and felt they could (as is also the case for the Ontario ads) be generated through “creative accounting — you can get numbers to say anything you want, what does it really mean? Nothing.”
- The bullet point text struck some as odd — “why are these in bullets? It’s not facts, it’s someone’s thoughts about messages or ‘spin’”
- The inclusion of the two URLs seemed out of place to some — “what are these for? What would we find there” and exclusionary for others “what if I don’t have the Internet?”

4 HOUSEHOLDER/BROCHURE

- Overall a very positive document. It was frequently described as “useful” and “informative” — “it offers a look at the problems and then solutions”.
- With the exception of the text box on the principles of the CHA, the participants felt the text was easy to read and not written in the “bureaucratic style” they expect from documents such as this. Even the CHA box was generally understandable, but perhaps somewhat complex.
- Some suggestions for improvements:
 - A stronger commitment in the section on ‘Government ideas’ — “they say they ‘could’ do these things, but will they? When? What’s the time frame?” Most participants felt this could be improved if there was some form of *commitment* to work on these (and other?) initiatives.
 - Possible overlap in the ideas section — e.g., telemedicine, electronic records, better use of health information – could perhaps be bundled together?
 - Clearer intro to URL and alternative methods of obtaining information.

A Note on Qualitative Research

It should be kept in mind when reading this report that these findings are drawn exclusively from a qualitative methodology. While every effort is made to balance various demographic characteristics when recruiting participants, these groups (and therefore the findings drawn from them) may not be said to be representative of the larger population as a whole. While groups generally indicate appropriate directionality, they do not serve as a proxy for a fully representative quantitative methodology. For the reader’s ease, these findings are depicted to some extent as definitive and projectable. This is, however, true only for the universe represented by these participants.



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MEMORANDUM

Date:	July 13, 2000
To:	Billie-Jo Bogden Communications Planning and Research Division Communications and Consultation Directorate Health Canada
Concerning:	Final Report on Health Care Advertisement Focus Groups
From:	EKOS Research Associates Inc.

- Two groups held in Ottawa, April 10.
 - One group made up of participants who had personally used or taken a family member to use the health care system at least three times in the last 12 months and one included participants who had not personally used or taken a family member to use the health care system in the last 12 months.

- Three products tested:
 - TV ad (“puzzle”)
 - Householder/brochure
 - Newspaper ad (three different images, same text)

- Caveat: These findings are based on a small number of groups and the discussion was intended as a “disaster check” and therefore did not evaluate the message(s) in depth.

1 BOTTOM LINE

- All products pass “disaster check” (exception may be print ad), but with varying degrees of enthusiasm.
 - TV ad does best overall, followed by brochure and print.
- No product escapes negative reviews, but largely in line with broader context of public cynicism about government advertising, in general, and elevated concerns about the status of the health care system.
- Clear window exists for providing public with information on health care, but very challenging to match product with public expectations.
 - Public interested in providing their input/views (e.g. e-mail, write-ins).
- Solitary focus on money/funding is highly suspect, with few apparent upsides for the overall message from the federal government. Preference is for positive and focused message.
 - Print ad, which clearly enters into a “numbers-based” response to the Ontario ads, may dilute the “high-ground” message of other ads.
 - At this stage, evidence suggests more “downside” than “upside” for current print ad

2 TV CONCEPT

2.1 “Puzzle” Ad

- TV ad not offensive: images generally evoked favourable reaction
- Positive attributes included: soft, subtle, calming
 - “It’s not like most ads, which are loud and in your face.”
 - “You could see this ad a lot without it bugging you”
- For a few, it was seen as defensive, vague
 - “It didn’t real tell us that much, which might mean that they (federal government) don’t have a whole lot to tell us right now.”
- Consistent with previous qualitative and quantitative findings, the issue of cost to the taxpayer was raised as a concern. Overall, however, participants tended to think that health care was an important issue and the government should provide information about its plans.

3 HOUSEHOLDER/BROCHURE

- OK, overall, with some cautions
- May participants found the text repetitive
 - For some, repetition reinforced the notion/suspicion that the federal government does not have a plan.
- Some participants speculated that without further clear, specific details of the plan, the brochure may well leave those most interested (and presumably involved) unsatisfied
- Some participants felt that they were unclear as to the purpose of the document and that, perhaps, a tighter concluding statement is needed
 - “Where is this going? What is the big overall goal? There should be something about that at the end?”
- Participants reacted favourably to the notion of a mechanism for public feedback on the document and also voiced interest in being able to obtain further information.
 - “We’re the ones who use the system, we could make some good suggestions about how it can be fixed”
- Specific suggestions on text:
 - Acknowledging the limited number of groups to draw reactions from, consideration might be given to the following observations:
 - The connection between home and community care and overcrowded emergency rooms might be more difficult to grasp than the link to hospitals more broadly.
 - The reference to broadening and accelerating changes in health care that are already taking place is open to mixed interpretation (negative associations with cuts). Broadening and accelerating improvements might be seen as more positive.

4 NEWSPAPER AD

- Mixed reactions to products tested.
- Two elements stood out as particularly troubling:
 - Message is seen as defensive and in direct response to the Government of Ontario.
 - “This ad isn’t really meant for me, it’s for the Ontario government.”
 - “This is back and forth politics stuff”

- The numbers generated more questions than answers. Many participants found the presentation confusing and, for some informed participants, misleading.
 - “These are different from the numbers I heard from the Ontario government. I guess they are both picking the numbers that work best for them”
 - “Sure, if you just look at one year it might seem to be an increase. But, if you take out \$100 bucks in the first place and then put back \$50, you are still down \$50.”
- Participants expressed fatigue with discussions/debates between levels of government about funding levels. The “numbers game” swayed very few participants.
 - “They (governments) talk about it like it’s their money, when really its all our (public’s) money anyway.”
 - “This ad (print) is more about politics, the other ads (T.V. and brochure) were more about informing us.”
 - The idea that it is all taxpayers’/citizens’ money (not Ontario’s nor Ottawa’s) may be a more effective (partial) rebuttal than the complex public accounting presented
- Participants who liked the print ads made reference to style elements that they saw as effective:
 - “It’s pretty direct. I could read this quickly.”
 - “It’s like Ontario attacked them (federal government) and know they are firing back.”
- Of the three images tested (i.e. little girl, puzzle map of Canada and stethoscope), the stethoscope was the preferred choice.
- Will obviously lose link/reinforcement of brochure and TV ad and compete with the more positive messaging of those products.

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