

DECISION

MS(PH) To Date the FaCeIt campaign has had a positive impact on Hep C awareness: 2 levels of testing. However this impact may be disproportionately focussed on the 'worried well'. Adding an additional focus on injecting drug users may make the campaign more efficient.

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HEPATITIS C AWARENESS CAMPAIGN IN 2008/09

The research suggests the focus is likely to be effective for IDUs but I think that care will need to be taken that the practitioners & public awareness campaign does not suffer disproportionately. Are you content with the change of direction?

1. This submission seeks your agreement to a change in the focus of the DH's hepatitis C £2.9 million awareness campaign (FaCe It) campaign in 2008/09 and to re-tender the public relations and advertising elements of the campaign.

• Are you content to re-tender as per OGC advice/good practice?

Recommendation

GRO-C

2/6

2. That you agree to:

- the change in focus, from general awareness to targeting specific at risk groups, which is being recommended following the outcomes of an extensive research process; and
- the re-tendering of the public relations and advertising contracts in line with OGC advice.

Ian I agree with your comments.

What guarantees can officials give that practitioners & public awareness

Timing

3. A reply is requested by 6 June so that COMMS can get the re-tendering exercise underway as soon as possible and deliver a new campaign in the second half of 2008/09. The proposed timetable is attached at Annex A. Is there a combined approach which could be used to maintain high levels of awareness?

Background

Hepatitis C Action Plan for England

4. The Hepatitis C Action Plan for England (June 2004), initially sets out a framework of actions for DH, the NHS and key stakeholders to improve the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of hepatitis C. Hepatitis C is a blood-borne virus that is mainly spread by blood-to-blood contact. It causes chronic, often asymptomatic, infection in many of those infected, and can result in cirrhosis and primary liver cancer. A key aspect of the Action Plan is to increase diagnosis so that NICE-recommended treatment can be offered to prevent progression to serious liver disease.

DH hepatitis C awareness campaign

5. The DH FaCe It awareness campaign in support of the Action Plan has been running since 2004. It aims to raise awareness of hepatitis C among healthcare professionals and the public, to encourage people who may be at risk to be tested and to inform people about avoiding risks of infection. This is important as it is estimated that there are about 200,000 people in England with chronic hepatitis C, of whom between about 100,000 – 140,000 people may be undiagnosed. The largest group estimated to be infected with chronic hepatitis C is former injecting drug users, who make up nearly 60% of the total. A summary of the impact of the campaign to date can be found at Annex B.

Research

6. Research has confirmed that the main group to target is former injecting drug users (60% of those estimated to be infected with hepatitis C), and also that this group do not feel

any stigma in being addressed directly. The results of this research can be found at **Annex C**.

however a dislike of a number of the adverts is that they only focus on intravenous drug users.

7. A number of additional important points have come from these studies such as the need to increase awareness in the South Asian community (using their local name for hepatitis C).

Future direction of the campaign

8. We therefore propose that the awareness campaign in 2008/09 encompasses the following:
- Continuing public relations activities for healthcare professionals and the general public, enhanced for risk groups such as former injecting drug users in particular, and South Asian communities and prisoners.
 - Advertising to raise awareness among the general public and risk groups.
9. A fuller document on the future direction of the campaign can be found at **Annex D**.

Re-tendering

10. The recommendation to re-tender is in line with good procurement practice because of the length of time (3-4 years) that the existing suppliers (Munro & Forster) have worked on the campaign.

Costs

11. As in previous years, the campaign for 2008/09 will be funded from a central programme budget held by Health Protection Division. Expenditure in 2008/09 on the FaCe It campaign is expected to be around £2.9 million, including related research and evaluation.

Media handling and stakeholder engagement

12. No media handling is necessary at this stage. We will be meeting with the hepatitis C voluntary and community sector to discuss the campaign once we have approval to re-tender. The Hepatitis C Trust may not be entirely happy with the increased focus on former injecting drug users but we will handle this through active stakeholder engagement.

Conclusion

14. Research indicates that the DH hepatitis C awareness campaign needs to be sustained. We recommend that you agree to:
- Continuing the awareness raising among healthcare professionals and the public, with increased targeting of specific risk groups, especially former injecting drug users;
 - A re-tender of the public relations and advertising elements of the campaign in 2008/09 – estimated campaign spend £2.9 million.

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