

Expanding CDC's Global Impact: Collaborative Partnerships in Health Communication and Marketing

[Announcer] This podcast is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC – safer, healthier people.

[John Anderton] Welcome to this edition of CDC's Health Marketing Matters Podcast series. I'm your host, Dr. John Anderton. My guest today is Melinda Frost, lead for the Global Communication and Marketing Team in CDC's National Center for Health Marketing. In this role, Melinda oversees NCHM's international communications program by coordinating partnerships with and technical assistance to Ministries of Health and United Nations agencies such as the WHO and its regional offices, international non-governmental organizations, and CDC's Global Science Program offices. In November 2007, Melinda will shift positions to lead NCHM's global marketing efforts in China. Welcome to Health Marketing Matters.

[Melinda Frost] Thanks, John.

[John Anderton] Can you tell me some of the functions of a global health marketing team?

[Melinda Frost] Sure. I believe the primary functions of a global health marketing team should be building capacities within Ministries of Health and international organizations. I also think it's critical these days especially for teams to serve as catalysts in communication and marketing research and program development.

[John Anderton] So then why is it important to facilitate communications and marketing within global contexts?

[Melinda Frost] I'm hoping that our audience is well aware of the need for health promotion domestically and internationally. The questions lie more in the most effective ways in which to promote health. While there has always been, you know, varying gaps in communication capacity among different Ministries of Health around the world, you know, even here in the U.S., the recent threat of pandemic influenza's highlighted the need for the global community to really more strongly support communication capacity enhancement efforts. Health communications and marketing capacity, in addition to information infrastructure, is critical for effective disease detection, outbreak, and emergency response. An effective response includes the rapid delivery of tailored health information to affected population and this requires identification, research, evaluation of innovative communication approaches, you know, before, during, and after a public health crisis. And basically this is what our team has been doing.

[John Anderton] Well, talk a little bit more about some of these health communications strategies that your team uses.

[Melinda Frost] We're really concerned with enhancing the capacities of the Ministries of Health to deal with the health emergencies and problems in their respective countries. We do this by facilitating trainings of health promotion staff and we give them tools that they need to inform their citizens during health emergencies such as emergency and risk communication principles that are culturally adapted for the nations that we're working in, and we've also been involved with pilot testing Information and Communication Technology systems, otherwise known as ICT, and looking at the unique e-health strategies. Lately, I think we're really moving more towards building up the capacity that the National Center for Health Marketing houses. In other words, communications and marketing research, e-Health strategies, and unique partnership development.

[John Anderton] Tell me a little bit more about where your team is working globally.

[Melinda Frost] Well, we're working in several areas. We started out primarily working in China and Central America, Kenya, and Thailand, but now we're really focusing in on China, Guatemala, and Kenya. The pandemic influenza threat really has broadened our work to a global market and through these efforts we've been partnering heavily with our colleagues in the WHO, WHO regional offices, UNICEF, and the World Bank.

[John Anderton] It makes sense to work on pandemic influenza in broad international context but tell me some of the other projects that the global health marketing team is working on in some of these pilot countries.

[Melinda Frost] Well, I'd like to use China as our model country. There we're really developing a comprehensive communications strategy alongside the Ministry of Health and China CDC. This includes rapid training for the public healthcare workforce and health marketing to the public. The entire project base is known as the Knowledge Sharing Center. In Guatemala, we're working on a laboratory safety campaign and we've developed the curriculum and we're using ICT, or information and communications technology networks, to disseminate this information. In Kenya we've been working a hospital infection prevention marketing campaign and we've also been assisting in developing out their information communications technology infrastructure by setting up a satellite base system between the different provincial medical offices throughout the country.

[John Anderton] I'm sure you're not doing these projects by yourself – tell me about some of the partners that you're working with in these countries.

[Melinda Frost] Ministries of Health – I can not overstate the importance of developing partnerships with them. Basically we can't work in these countries without their acceptance, permission, and invitation. These partnerships are critical for all of our activities. We also work with CDC's Global Science Program offices and the UN agencies such as WHO and UNICEF. Additionally, we feel as though cultivating partnerships with the local NGOs is also an important part of what we do and we're certainly very interested in creating new partnerships with other organizations. I'd really

like to actually highlight also our efforts in partnering with the private sector – we’re really looking at large companies that have a certain structure for corporate social responsibility and helping them identify the most effective ways of using their international health-sector dollars.

[John Anderton] Of course CDC is a United States government organization. Tell me why CDC is so involved with global health marketing.

[Melinda Frost] Yes, you’re right. CDC is a U.S. Government organization, but if you think about it, it really makes perfect sense. Globalization has taken over the world and with all of the good things its given to the world, its also increased the spread of diseases. Diseases know no borders. The goal of the global communication and marketing team is to help mitigate the effects of these diseases by enhancing different countries’ abilities to communicate appropriate messages to their people. The CDC has been working internationally for a number of years. Our main international programs include the Global AIDS Program, the International Emerging Infections Program, the Field Epidemiology Training Program, and the Global Immunization Program. And recently, there have been a few major initiatives addressing global diseases such as the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, President’s Malaria Initiative, among others. With the emergence of global diseases like pan flu and SARS, it’s not surprising that CDC’s presence overseas has increased and will probably continue to increase.

[John Anderton] Well that brings up the point that if an organization wants to it has never done this before and wants to do global health marketing, what are some of the strategies that we’ve learned out of these interactions that you could recommend to some of the listeners?

[Melinda Frost] I think my first recommendation for any organization interested in working in this area is really to assess the needs at the country level. Work with the ministries and try not to duplicate efforts. There’s so few international, you know, global health dollars, we really really need to be able to point them in a direction that’s really going to do some good in partnership with the other organizations and the ministry at the country level.

[John Anderton] You’ve talked at length about some of the specific efforts that we’re seeing in countries we’re already partnering with from CDC. Are there other plans to expand into new or different countries with some of these efforts?

[Melinda Frost] I see the need for this type of capacity that we’re providing to ministries of health all over the world. There are a few other leading organizations involved with health communications, but none are really providing consistent support to the international ministerial levels in helping to augment their abilities to respond to disease conditions in their own countries.

[John Anderton] A moment ago you talked a little bit about China being a model country. Can you tell me a little bit about the work that's happening with the Chinese Ministry of Health?

[Melinda Frost] Yeah, you're right – I'm really proud of our project base in China. We're working in areas such as risk communications where we're adapting Western-based risk communications principles for use in China. We're helping with the development of a website that's intended for the public health care workforce and the public at large, and we're working on a toll-free information line for the China CDC, which is incidentally actually named after our U.S CDC. We're also working in more disease-specific areas such as influenza, rabies, and smoking cessation, and we really have a strong partnership on both sides of the health sector in China – we're working with the Ministry of Health and, again, China CDC. And those partners are working in the areas of emergency response, emerging infections, chronic diseases, birth defects, and Information and Communication Technology infrastructure. And this is the first position of its kind for CDC and we're really hoping that we can show the impact of this technical assistance and then expand to positions like this in other major CDC field bases over the next couple of years.

[John Anderton] Melinda, thanks a lot for your time. We appreciate you sharing this information on CDC's global health marketing plans and I've enjoyed speaking with you.

[Melinda Frost] Thank you.

[John Anderton] If you'd like more information on CDC's health marketing efforts, please call 1-800-CDC-INFO or visit www.cdc.gov/healthmarketing. Thanks and see ya next time.

[Announcer] To access the most accurate and relevant health information that affects you, your family, and your community, please visit www.cdc.gov.