

Case Study: *Don't Be Silent*

BWA has worked with the New York State Department of Health and over thirty of its smoking cessation centers across the state since 2007. The *Don't Be Silent About Smoking* campaign was launched in February 2008 to encourage primary health care providers to take an active role in helping their patients quit smoking. The target audience was selected as a result of formative research showing that health care providers are strong influencers in assisting smokers to quit successfully.

Don't Be Silent has received significant media attention and is the winner of a Communicator Award and an American Graphic Design Award. BWA's budget for the current contract year is \$295,000. BWA has handled every aspect of the design and implementation of this multi-year campaign, from the initial formative research to the creation of print, Internet and out-of-home advertising to the development of a website (www.talktoyourpatients.org), brochures, and collateral materials. Branded items such as mugs, scroll pens, stress grips and stethoscope tags have helped sustain messaging beyond the active campaign period for each successive campaign.

Creative for the first phase of the campaign featured multicultural physicians with the powerful image of stitches or tape over their mouths and the copy: "Your patients trust you. They need your guidance. Don't be silent about smoking. This is your greatest opportunity to save lives." For the campaign launch BWA organized a press conference featuring the State Health Commissioner and Dr. Mehmet Oz. BWA created key messages, talking points, and media training for the speakers, as well as briefing materials for upper management at the health department and the Governor's office. BWA obtained an exclusive with the Associated Press (AP) and received coverage by the New York Daily News, WNBC-TV, Fox 5 New York, and more than 65 other media outlets to reach an estimated audience of more than 6 million people.

The third-party evaluation of the first phase of the campaign showed that among primary care physicians, nurse practitioners, and physician assistants, 79.8 percent agreed the campaign grabbed their attention. In addition, overall 65 percent of providers agreed the ads made them think about doing more to help patients stop using tobacco. Among providers who saw the campaign, they were overall more likely to assess their patient's tobacco use. Also, they were more likely to be aware of the services provided by the New York State Smoker's Quitline and more aware of New York State's Medicaid Benefits that provide coverage for cessation medications.

The second phase of the campaign was also directed to providers, but featured patients of all races smoking with an enlarged ear, looking intently at the camera. The copy read: "Your patients are listening. Ask them about smoking. Urge them to quit. Provide support and medication. Don't give up." This message reminded doctors to talk with patients about their tobacco habits. Formative research found that many doctors do not even talk to their smoking patients about quitting because they do not have the time, do not think they can help, or do not think their patients want to listen. This phase of the campaign emphasized the degree to which



patients are actually quite receptive to assistance from their doctor to quit tobacco. The oversized ear depicted on the patients photographed, along with collateral material such as ear-shaped stress grips, served to emphasize this point.

The evaluation showed the campaign reached 38 percent of New York State primary care physicians, and 81 percent said the ads grabbed their attention. Physicians who saw the campaign were 6 to 12 percent more likely to implement evidence-based recommendations for assisting their patients to quit smoking.

The next phase of the campaign featured a gloved hand injecting a needle into a lit cigarette with the copy “Smoking is a Disease – Treat It!” and subcopy stating, “You wouldn’t let a patient with heart disease leave your office without being treated. But every day doctors in New York State fail to treat their patients who smoke.” The campaign reminded clinicians that effective treatment for tobacco dependence is available, and every patient who smokes should be offered effective treatment. Advertisements were placed on medical websites and in medical journals, newspapers, and other publications. The website supplemented the media campaign by offering easy-to-access information and resources to help clinicians assist their patients to quit smoking and provided links to the Tobacco Cessation Centers, funded by the Department of Health, that provide free assistance to health care providers to establish policies, practices and procedures in order to deliver effective treatment and quit methods to their patients.

Subsequent phases of the *Don’t Be Silent* campaign have specifically focused on increasing the utilization of smoking cessation benefits provided through Medicaid coverage, targeting both providers and Medicaid recipients. The media included ads in print publications and medical journals, such as *Journal of Healthcare for the Poor and Underserved*, *Journal of the American Medical Association*, and the *National Hispanic Medical Association Newsletter*. Digital ads have been displayed on sites most visited by providers, such as *E-Medicine/Medscape* and *Cardiosource.org*; posters and brochures are also produced. Content on *TalkToYourPatients.org* is continually updated include resources and facts about Medicaid coverage and resources.