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The Rochester Institute of Technology

Department of Communication

College of Liberal Arts

Uncomfortably Numb:

News Media's Effects on Generational Perceptions of Cancer Prevention

by

Jillian Elizabeth Seaton Ference

*A Thesis* submitted

in partial fulfillment of the Master of Science degree

in Communication & Media Technologies

Degree Awarded:

May 6, 2015

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## Table of Contents

Abstract .....	4
Introduction .....	5
Research Questions .....	6
Rationale .....	7
Personal .....	7
Social .....	7
Scholarly .....	8
Literature Review .....	8
The Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Generation Y .....	8
Agenda Building .....	10
Media and News .....	12
Cancer Communication .....	13
Promotion and Prevention .....	14
Method .....	15
Participants .....	15
Measures .....	16
Procedures .....	16
Analysis .....	17
Discussion .....	19
Limitations and Strengths .....	20
Future Research and Questions .....	21
References .....	22
Appendix: Survey/Questionnaire .....	26

UNCOMFORTABLY NUMB: NEWS MEDIA'S EFFECTS ON GENERATIONAL  
PERCEPTIONS OF CANCER PREVENTION MESSAGES

Jillian Elizabeth Seaton Ference

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Master of Science in Communication & Media Technologies

Term Degree Awarded: Spring 2015 Semester (2145)

Abstract

This study investigated the effects news media have on perceptions of cancer prevention for three generations: Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Generation Y. It explored the relationship between self-reported exposure to general news media and knowledge of cancer prevention by generation, the relationship between self-reported exposure to news media by generation, and the likelihood of participating in preventative actions. A snowball survey was distributed throughout Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. Statistically significant relationships were found between exposure to news media pertaining to cancer and knowledge about cancer, as well as exposure to general news media and knowledge about cancer prevention. Differences between generations' preference of news media and knowledge about cancer and prevention were not statistically significant. Avenues of further research are suggested.

*Keywords:* cancer, prevention, media, generations, health

## Uncomfortably Numb: News Media's Effects on Generational Perceptions of Cancer Prevention

Youth has been described as many things, ranging from an idea to a life stage where new understandings about the past, present, and future of public life are encoded, articulated, and contested; hence, it has become a metaphor for social change (Kitch, 2003). According to Smith and Clurman (1997) “each generation is driven by unique ideas about the lifestyle to which it aspires” (p. xiv). Today, most Americans are familiar with the terms *Baby Boomers*, people who were born after the Second World War and became young adults in the 1960s, *Generation X*, who were young adults in the 1980s, and *Generation Y*, children of the Baby Boomers who are young adults today (Kitch, 2003).

As posited by the agenda setting theory, the media, government, and society reciprocally affect one another. An example of this can be found in a 1985 study conducted by Weaver and Elliot which discovered that, in many instances, the press is merely passing on the ideas and priorities set by institutions in society, suggesting a source-media relationship in which the press interacts with other institutions to create the public agenda (Weaver & Elliot, 1985). Although many factors can contribute to shaping what information does or does not make it to the public, reporters, producers, news managers, or online moderators ultimately decide which stories will or will not be made public.

The subject of health has become a large component of news reporting and commentary. With a large array of topics from the common cold to male menopause, health reporting has become so popular that many news media today will employ a separate health reporter in addition to general assignment journalists (Tanner, 2004). This creates a form of codependence between the medical community and the news media. Health reporting is different and can be viewed as a separate entity from general or other beat reporting. As opposed to other beats, the

media do not independently decide what to print or air because in many instances, health reporters are dependent on the medical community for scientific information as well explanations of the importance of the material; likewise, without the media, groundbreaking research would never reach the public. One health topic that receives a great deal of media attention and has become a household name is cancer.

Despite the amount of attention and money devoted to fighting cancer since the passing of the National Cancer Act of 1971, it remains the second leading cause of death in the United States, and roughly 56,340 Americans are expected to die of cancer this year alone (American Cancer Society, 2009; Hoyert & Xu, 2012). Cancer prevention is a key to reducing cancer rates and perhaps its elimination. The variation of cancer occurrences from country to country, and among certain groups of people within a country, suggest that most forms of cancer are in fact preventable (Cairns, 1985). Although it would seem to be a moral obligation to report on cancer prevention, this can result in a double-edged sword. A 2006 study conducted by Goldman et al. noted public numbness as a result of being bombarded with media's coverage of cancer information. The present study sought to discover the media's influence on Baby Boomers,' Generation X's, and Generation Y's knowledge and perceptions of cancer prevention, the differences and relationships in desire to implement preventative actions throughout the three generations, and differences between news media preferences by generation.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions will be explored:

*RQ 1:* What is the difference by generation and news medium preference and respondents' knowledge about cancer?

*RQ 2:* What is the relationship between self-reported exposure to general news media and generations' knowledge about cancer prevention?

*RQ 3:* What is the relationship between self-reported exposure to news media by generation and perceptions of cancer prevention?

*RQ 4:* What is the relationship between the amount of exposure to news media and willingness to participate in measures to prevent cancer?

### **Rationale**

#### **Personal**

I lost my father to cancer in 2009 and have since become curious about how public attention through the news media may contribute to preventative measures being taken. I do feel we have been bombarded by the warnings, “don’t smoke, don’t drink alcohol, eat right, and exercise regularly.” While we do not want to become sick with cancer, I do not believe we are particularly willing to change our day-to-day lives to prevent something that may or may not happen. I believe a better way to communicate prevention is possible and needs to be discovered.

#### **Social**

Generation Y is growing up. The older members are beginning to make their mark in the world while the younger members are finishing high school. The Baby Boomers are heading towards retirement, while Generation X is becoming established in their own niche. Most everyone spanning these three generations has at least known someone affected by cancer. Understanding the importance media attach to specific topics and the best way to communicate cancer prevention in a way that will stick with current and future generations will hopefully influence the up and coming Generation Z as well as generations to follow.

## **Scholarly**

Although a great deal of research has been conducted regarding generational similarities and gaps, no studies have been found with regard to health communication, cancer knowledge, or the mass media's impact on the importance placed on communicating cancer prevention methods. The findings in the current study could potentially lead to further research to better communicate cancer prevention to future generations.

## **Literature Review**

### **The Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Generation Y**

Independent of mass media influences, people have long defined their identities with regard to others their own age, with whom they “travel through life stages and weather special moments of social and political change” (Kitch, 2003, p. 185). When people are asked to name the most important historical events of their own lifetimes, they almost always refer back to when they were in their teens or twenties, showing that adolescence and early adulthood are the primary periods for generational imprinting (Kitch, 2003). Strauss and Howe (1991) studied 18 generations over a 400-year span and found four generational archetypes that recur cyclically. However, although each and every one of us fits into our own, unique generation based on when we are born, several generations coexist together at any given time. According to Manheim, (1927/1952), “every moment of time is like a temporal volume having more than one dimension because it is always experienced by several generations at various stages of development” (p. 283). Magazines attempt to define each group by pinpointing a defining moment that united it, either a multi-year war such as World War II or Vietnam, a cultural event like Woodstock, or a national disaster like the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center. In just a brief few

years, media coverage can create a sense of nostalgia for a generation that may not even be that old.

Although Baby Boomers were born as early as 1946, they are still making their mark in news media today. Recent journalistic explanations of any generation tend to lead back to the Baby Boom. Gross and Scott (1990, July 16), state, “the Boomer group is so huge that it tends to define every era it passes through, forcing society to accommodate its moods and dimensions” (p. 57). The Baby Boomers were the Spock generation, the Now generation, the Woodstock generation, and the Me generation. As described by Thomas in 1986, “through high times and hard times, no other group of Americans has ever been so noisily self-conscious” (pp. 22-23).

Making its mark in the beginning of 1965 through 1979, Generation X has endured its share of struggles both in and of its own generation and through the media. In *Time* magazine, Gross and Scott (1990, July 16) proclaimed in the sub-heading that Generation X was “laid back, late blooming, or just lost? Overshadowed by the Baby Boomers, America’s next generation has a hard act to follow” (p. 56). Also referred to as the “Baby Busters,” Generation X was once regarded as an unsung generation, hardly recognized as a social force or even noticed much at all. Gross and Scott (1990, July 16), describe them as follows:

They have trouble making decisions. They have few heroes, no anthems, no style to call their own. They crave entertainment, but their attention span is as short as one zap of a TV dial. They postpone marriage because they dread divorce. They possess only a hazy sense of their own identity but at a monumental preoccupation with all the problems the preceding generation will leave for them to fix. (p. 57)

However, history has shown that every generation begins with a negative connotation and later leads into a positive one. Despite these early descriptions of Generation X, Hornblower (1997,

June 9) has described them as “full of go-getters who are just doing it- but their way” (p. 58) and “for all their ironic detachment, Generation X embraced the American Dream-albeit one different from the vision their parents or grandparents had” (p. 60).

Also being compared to the Baby Boomers, Generation Y made its debut on newsweekly covers in 1990, the exact same year as Generation X. Generation Y has commonly been referred to as “a generation on fast forward” - prematurely sexual, technologically savvy, and multicultural. They are described in terms of pop culture and consumer behavior such as clothing, music idols, “gear” - computer software, and other technology (Kitch, 2003). Also described as the Millennial Generation, full of people who are spiritual, optimistic, and ambitious, “psychologists worry that in their rush to act like grown-ups, these kids will never really learn to be grown up” (Kitch 2005, pp. 64-65). Later in their development, Generation Y also adopted the nickname Generation 9/11 because of the attacks on the Twin Towers. As described by Kantrowitz and Naughton (2001), “the generation that once had it all- peace, prosperity, even the dot-com dream of retiring at 30- faces its defining moment” (pp. 47-48). In that same article, a 24-year-old stated, “we had no crisis, no Vietnam, no Martin Luther King, no JFK. We’ve got it now” (p. 48).

### **Agenda Building**

Without the media, groundbreaking research would never reach the public (Nelkin, 1995). Health is one of the few beats in television news and the most important in local television newsrooms (Potter, 2003). A 2002 Gallup poll found that the majority of Americans receive more of their health and medical information from television than from any other media source. Almost half of these respondents indicated that they sometimes ask their doctors specific questions as a direct result of something they have heard or read in the media or on the Internet.

However, health reporting is different from general or other beat reporting because the media do not independently decide what to print or air because the health reporters are, in many instances, dependent on the medical community for scientific information and to explain the importance of the material (Corbett & Mori, 1999).

More than two-thirds of reporters and journalists interviewed in a 2004 study by Tanner (2004) indicated that they had no specialized training in health, and more than half of those confirmed that they do broadcast health stories daily. In addition, only one-third of health reporters said they concentrate solely on health reporting, while most are required to cover other stories in addition to their daily health beat. Many general assignment reporters may be assigned a beat that they must cover in addition to their general assignment reporting duties, while having no specialized knowledge about the subject in which they are deemed an expert (Tanner, 2004). At the local level, 79% of all stories deal with health and medicine, and many local television news stations now employ their own health reporter. Some larger media markets are increasingly employing physicians to relate health information to the public (Schwitzer, 1992).

In connection with the lack of specialized training, the lack of resources and reporters at local television stations has an effect on what is broadcast. In today's newsroom, the bottom line tends to be more important than covering relevant news stories, and in many instances local television news reporters cover stories that are easy to do rather than what the audience wants (Kaniss, 1991). Motivations for health topics have been specified as the audience's interest in a story and the ability to humanize the story as forerunners, with available resources and ability to shoot video also being strong influences for what makes the air (Tanner, 2004). This leads us to believe that the media are not solely setting the public agenda, but the public itself, along with health sources in the community, determine what is aired. However, this information can also

brandish a disturbing, double-edged sword because this suggests that a reporter may decide not to cover a newsworthy story due to lack of video or humanization opportunities.

### **Media and News**

How mass media cover cancer may have important implications for cancer prevention and control. Despite all the attention and money devoted to fighting cancer since the passage of the National Cancer Act of 1971, cancer remains the second leading cause of death in the United States today (Slater, Long, Bettinghaus, & Reineke, 2008). This statistic suggests that cancer prevention and control are still major priorities for the health of America.

Treatment is the most frequently covered topic of newspaper, magazine, and television cancer news coverage of cancer, followed by causes and deaths. Prevention, along with detection, is an extremely important topic for public health; however, it is the least frequently covered topic (Slater et al., 2008). Perceptions about health and safety risks are associated with the extent of news coverage of these risks (Combs & Slovic, 1979) and news coverage of some health risks has been shown to influence public policy and individual behavior (Yanovitzky & Bennett, 1999).

Attention to one kind of cancer may come at the expense of attention to another kind of cancer. Heavier media attention could reduce the knowledge gaps, although moderate publicity or lack of news coverage may actually widen them. Because of this, we are led to believe that the amount of attention given to news media about cancer is critical (Slater et al., 2008).

Along with the various other topics covered in health reporting, cancer competes with other health issues for a limited amount of coverage in the general interest news media. Different types of cancer, or stories that focus on prevention versus detection versus treatment for a given type of cancer, may in effect compete with one another for public attention. Breast

cancer is the most commonly covered type of cancer, with little attention given to prostate, colorectal, and lung cancer, despite the fact that they are just as common and just as deadly (Slater et al., 2008).

### **Cancer Communication**

In 2014, some 585,720 Americans are expected to die from cancer in the next year, equaling 1,600 deaths per day. If they had been engaged in more healthy lifestyles, followed regular screening schedules, and incorporated patient-centered communication into their health care experience, 50-65% of these lives could have been saved with current knowledge (American Cancer Society, 2014). Medicine in the 21<sup>st</sup> century must become proactive, predictive, and oriented toward preventing problems from advancing to the point of impact on functioning (Culliton, 2006). Research has since suggested that the effectiveness of the relationship between physicians and cancer patients affects patients' sense of quality of life (Epstein & Street, 2007). One of the primary functions of health communication is for patients and health care providers to exchange information, express concerns and describe symptoms, and discuss diagnosis and treatment.

Patients need accurate and credible information so that they may base their decisions regarding treatment on the same evidence base as that used by their health care providers. Therefore, focused research is needed to understand how to provide patients with informational support they need to guide their actions in timely and effective ways (Hesse, 2009). Health communication should provide patients with up-to-date information about the nature of their condition, an expected timeline, likely consequences, and expected outcomes of the condition, its cause, and an expectation as to whether it is possible to exert control through treatment and personal action (Cameron & Levanthal, 2003).

As the health system moves away from its historical stance dominated by a problem-oriented medical model, to a more proactive stance as a patient-centered support system, it must learn how to give patients the information and skills they need to be active participants in their own care (Cayton, 2006). In Hesse's 2009 survey, it was determined that the general public preferred going to their own physicians for trusted health information, but when put in the position to find health information, they actually consulted the Internet instead. In a 2002 study by the Pew Foundation, it was found that one of the reasons people go to the Web to look for health information is to gain support for the vital decisions they must make for themselves and their loved ones (Fox & Rainie, 2002). In an era of extraordinary evolution in communication technology and advances in scientific knowledge, there exists an astonishing hope that behavioral researchers and communication scientists can work hand-in-hand with policy makers, medical practitioners, and other biomedical scientists to accelerate progress against cancer (Hesse, 2009). Change has begun, driven by Baby Boomers adopting a do-it-yourself attitude in many aspects of their lives, and the Millennials growing up as natives in a world infused with information technology. Collaboration and innovation require the use of new media to extend the reach, efficiency, and effectiveness of biomedical knowledge. Therefore, news media serve an important agenda-setting function for policy makers and for the public debate (Sato, 2003). Much of the theory and science underlying health communication emerged from an era of mass media; however, the public's cognitive overload can lead to confusion when it comes to sheer number of health messages.

### **Promotion and Prevention**

Every day, individuals can take steps to control their own cancer risks. Continuous updating of cancer information by the news media and health organizations keeps the public

aware of current developments that may be applied to their lives (Robinson, 1986). However, many barriers to learning about cancer exist today, with denial and the distractions of day-to-day living pulling the lead. Cancer prevention is a key to decreasing and eliminating cancer as a major source of morbidity and mortality. Important causes of death over the ages range from such diseases as malaria, cholera, typhus, scurvy, and pellagra. The incidence of these diseases has decreased because humankind has learned how to prevent their occurrence. This suggests that most forms of cancer are preventable (Cairns, 1985). Consequently, the National Cancer Program has moved from the quest for a cure in the “war on cancer” to scientific standards focusing on the study and promotion of cancer prevention (Greenberg, 1986). Among people who think about their health and have fairly accurate ideas about health promotion, only a minority of these people actually act upon this knowledge. In March of 1984, the National Cancer Institution introduced the Cancer Prevention Awareness program, aimed at improving attitudes and knowledge regarding cancer incidence, treatment, and prevention, and to encourage people to adopt healthy behaviors to reduce their cancer risk (Robinson, 1986).

## **Method**

### **Participants**

This study was conducted by distributing a snowball survey and quiz-like questionnaire throughout the social networking websites Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. Participants were asked to indicate during which block of years they were born to determine which participants belonged to the Baby Boomer Generation (persons born between the years 1946 and 1964), Generation X (persons born between the years 1965 and 1979), and Generation Y (persons born between the years 1980 and 1994). Three participants’ dates of birth fell outside the date ranges

of the three generations being studied. These three responses were not included in the study's results.

### **Measures**

The survey questions asked the participants to self-report their preferred news medium (print, radio, television, Internet, or new media), how often they are exposed to news media, how often they are exposed to news reports regarding cancer and prevention, and how they perceive these messages. Additionally, the survey asked each participant questions regarding their own cancer preventative actions. The results were measured and compared to determine relationships and differences between the generations and their knowledge and perceptions about cancer in relation to their exposure and preferences in news media.

In the middle, between the survey and quiz-like questionnaire, each participant was asked to indicate his or her birth year by selecting one of three options to determine which generation he or she belongs to. The quiz (hidden in the form of a questionnaire) asked participants basic questions regarding cancer prevention and general cancer knowledge to measure participants' knowledge of cancer and prevention.

### **Procedures**

Once a participant made the decision to click on the survey link, he or she was immediately directed to a consent form. The consent form informed the participant the purpose of the survey was to study the effects news media may have on perceptions of cancer prevention for three generations: Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Generation Y. Participants were also informed that the 26-question survey should take no longer than 10 minutes to complete and that participation in the survey was completely voluntarily and could be exited at any time. The consent form indicated that no risks were anticipated from completing the survey, all answers

would be kept confidential, and any potential link between responder and response would be destroyed.

### **Analysis**

A total of 99 participants completed the snowball survey. Of the 99 responses collected, 16 participants were Baby Boomers, 14 participants belonged to Generation X, and 67 participants were part of Generation Y. Two of the 99 participants fell outside of the three generations included in the study; thus, these two responses were excluded from the data analysis. Of the 97 responses included in the data analysis, statistically significant relationships were found between amount of exposure to news media and knowledge about cancer facts and prevention. Although differences were found between generations' preferences of news media and knowledge about cancer and prevention, they were not statistically significant.

Research Question 1 asks, "What is the difference by generation and news medium preference and respondents' knowledge about cancer?" Because this question poses two variables, the analysis was divided into two separate tests: one test to determine the difference between generations and news medium preference, and one to determine the difference between each generation with regard to knowledge about cancer. Knowledge test questions were separated and "graded." Each correct answer was given a score of "1" and each incorrect answer was given a score of "0". Complete results were then tallied and a Pearson chi-square test was run for each of the two portions of the question.

A statistically significant difference was found between news medium preferences by generation. Generation Y heavily favored the Internet as their preferred news source, while Baby Boomers were heavily in favor of television as their source of news. Generation X was divided between the Internet and television as their preferred news medium.

A statistically significant difference was also found between generations with regards to knowledge about cancer. While the majority of participants from all three generations scored in the middle grade range, several participants from the Baby Boomers and Generation Y did receive perfect scores, while responses from Generation X received zero perfect scores. These two statistically significant differences showed that heavy inclination towards one main news medium resulted in higher cancer knowledge scores; however, it did not show an increase or decrease in knowledge based on preference between the Internet or television as a main source of news.

Research Question 2 asks, “What is the relationship between self-reported exposure to news media and generations’ knowledge about cancer prevention?” Survey questions testing prevention knowledge were also “graded” and once again assigned a 1 for each correct answer and a 0 for each incorrect answer. Each response was then analyzed and marked as light exposure to news media, medium exposure to news media, or heavy exposure to news media based on self-reported data. A Kendall’s W test was applied to determine if a correlation between exposure to news media and generations’ knowledge about cancer prevention was present.

A statistically significant relationship was not found between amounts of exposure to news media in relation to knowledge about cancer prevention. Self-reported data indicated that the majority of Baby Boomers and Generation Y were heavily exposed to news media while Generation X was voluntarily exposed to news media less frequently with most responses falling in the medium exposure range. Despite the difference in frequency of voluntary exposure to the news, all three generations were equally knowledgeable on the topic of cancer prevention and all received high scores on prevention questions.

Research Question 3 asks, “What is the relationship between the frequency of exposure to news media and willingness to participate in measures to prevent cancer?” Survey questions asking likelihood to partake in preventative measures against cancer were tallied for each participant by assigning a 0 for extremely unlikely, 1 for unlikely, 2 for neutral, 3 for likely, and 4 for extremely likely. Responses were then totaled and a Friedman test was run to determine whether or not a correlation was present.

In this instance, a statistically significant relationship was found. Results showed that the greater the amount of exposure by generation, the more likely the generation was to partake in preventative measures, specifically among members of Generation Y. While more Baby Boomer responses indicated likelihood to participate in preventative measures than those that were neutral or unlikely, an equal number of responses were as unlikely to participate in preventative measures as those that were neutral on the topic. The majority of Generation X responses was neutral on the topic of prevention and was neither likely nor unlikely to participate in preventative measures against cancer, which did fall in line with Generation X responses reporting medium exposure to news media.

### **Discussion**

The conclusion of this study found that the Baby Boomers are knowledgeable about cancer but unwilling to take preventative measures against cancer. Generation Y is both knowledgeable about cancer and willing to partake in preventative measures against cancer while Generation X is neither knowledgeable about cancer nor willing to take part in preventative measures against cancer. Despite the generational differences in likelihood to partake in preventative measures against cancer, all three generations are knowledgeable about prevention.

Generation X's lack of responses, knowledge, and likelihood to participate in preventative measures against cancer falls in line with Hornblower's 1997 assessment of "ironic detachment" and "living their own way" (p. 60) but poses more questions of how to breakthrough to this generation about the importance of cancer prevention. This also relates back to the 2006 study by Goldman et al. citing public numbness as a result of being bombarded by cancer coverage in the media. Although Generation X self-reported only medium level exposure to news media on a regular basis, the survey question asked specifically for level of voluntarily exposure. This raises two additional questions: is Generation X being exposed to an increased level of news media on an involuntary basis and if so, are they choosing to tune out the news when it is not on their own terms? Additionally, what kind of media communication is necessary for the Baby Boomers to increase their likelihood to partake in preventative measures? What can be learned from Generation Y's heavy consumption of news media, knowledge about cancer, and willingness to partake in preventative measures against cancer?

### **Limitations and Strengths**

The study presents a few limitations and at least one or more strengths. The data collected was self-reported and therefore impacts the validity of the study. The self-reported data analyzed in this study reflects what the participant wants to report and may or may not reflect the participant's true habits or behaviors.

Newspapers and magazines often cross-publish online, creating an ambiguity between print and Internet. Some participants may regard one medium as either "print" or "Internet" and use the terms interchangeably whether reading an article online or in the tangible form of a newspaper or magazine. Additionally, an uneven number of responses were collected from each generation. Because the majority of responses came from members of Generation Y, all test

results were heavily weighted towards Generation Y. This makes it impossible to know if test results would have differed had an even number of responses been received for each of the three generations.

The greatest strength of this study stems from the topic itself. Cancer is an issue that affects everyone in the United States today, whether directly or indirectly. Voluntary participation in the survey also adds to the study's strength because all responses were anonymous with nothing to be gained or lost. Additionally, statistically significant differences and relationships were both found in the study that open up new questions for future research.

### **Future Research and Questions**

Using the results of this study and the findings of previous studies on generational communication, more in depth research can be conducted to determine the best method to communicate the importance of taking preventative measures against cancer to all generations. Future studies should investigate a relationship between daily exposure to various news media and likelihood to participate in preventative measures as well as determine which sources of news media are reporting the most information about cancer prevention.

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## Appendix

## Survey/Questionnaire

1. How often are you voluntarily exposed to news media?
  - a. Never
  - b. Rarely
  - c. Sometimes
  - d. Often
  - e. Always
  
2. What is your preferred **news** medium?
  - a. Print
  - b. Television
  - c. Radio
  - d. Internet
  - e. New Media
  
3. On a weekly basis, how often do you hear or read news reports pertaining to cancer?
  - a. Never
  - b. Rarely
  - c. Occasionally
  - d. A moderate number
  - e. A great deal

4. How knowledgeable would you consider yourself about cancer in general?
  - a. Not at all knowledgeable
  - b. Slightly knowledgeable
  - c. Somewhat knowledgeable
  - d. Moderately knowledgeable
  - e. Extremely knowledgeable
  
5. How knowledgeable would you consider yourself about cancer prevention?
  - a. Not at all knowledgeable
  - b. Slightly knowledgeable
  - c. Somewhat knowledgeable
  - d. Moderately knowledgeable
  - e. Extremely knowledgeable
  
6. How effective would you consider the news media in communicating cancer prevention methods?
  - a. Not at all effective
  - b. Slightly effective
  - c. Somewhat effective
  - d. Moderately effective
  - e. Extremely effective

7. How influential do you consider the media in regards to cancer prevention?
  - a. Not at all influential
  - b. Slightly influential
  - c. Somewhat influential
  - d. Very influential
  - e. Extremely influential
  
8. How influential would you say the news media have been in regards to your general knowledge about cancer?
  - a. Not at all influential
  - b. Slightly influential
  - c. Somewhat influential
  - d. Very influential
  - e. Extremely influential
  
9. How much would you say the news media have influenced your knowledge about cancer prevention?
  - a. Not at all
  - b. Slightly
  - c. Somewhat
  - d. Very much
  - e. Extremely

10. Please indicate during which block of years you were born:
  - a. Between 1946 and 1964
  - b. Between 1965 and 1979
  - c. Between 1980 and 1995
  - d. None of these
  
11. Are any types of cancer preventable?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  
12. How many new diagnoses of cancer are expected to occur in the United States this year?
  - a. Fewer than 250,000
  - b. 250,000- 500,000
  - c. 500,000 – 1-million
  - d. More than 1-million
  
13. Can cancer be treated?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  
14. Does cancer always have symptoms?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No

13. How likely are you to regularly partake in screenings and self-examinations to detect cancer?
- a. Extremely unlikely
  - b. Unlikely
  - c. Neutral
  - d. Likely
  - e. Extremely likely
16. How likely are you to avoid smoking cigarettes and/or chewing tobacco?
- a. Extremely unlikely
  - b. Unlikely
  - c. Neutral
  - d. Likely
  - e. Extremely likely
17. How likely are you to drink alcohol in moderation (if at all)?
- a. Extremely unlikely
  - b. Unlikely
  - c. Neutral
  - d. Likely
  - e. Extremely likely

18. How likely are you to predominantly eat foods from plant-based sources (i.e., five or more servings of fruits and vegetables, whole grains, beans) on a regular basis?
- a. Extremely unlikely
  - b. Unlikely
  - c. Neutral
  - d. Likely
  - e. Extremely likely
19. How likely are you to avoid foods that are high in fat?
- a. Extremely unlikely
  - b. Unlikely
  - c. Neutral
  - d. Likely
  - e. Extremely likely
20. How likely are you to stay active and maintain a healthy weight (i.e., make a conscious effort to be physically active for 30 minutes or more on most days of the week)?
- a. Extremely unlikely
  - b. Unlikely
  - c. Neutral
  - d. Likely
  - e. Extremely likely

21. How likely are you to protect yourself from the sun (ie, using sunscreen and avoiding tanning beds and sunlamps)?
- Extremely unlikely
  - Unlikely
  - Neutral
  - Likely
  - Extremely likely
22. How likely are you to become immunized against viral infections such as Hepatitis B and Human papillomavirus (HPV)?
- Extremely unlikely
  - Unlikely
  - Neutral
  - Likely
  - Extremely likely
23. Can anyone develop cancer?
- Yes
  - No
24. Are men or women typically more at risk for developing cancer?
- Men
  - Women

- c. Men and women are at equal risk
- d. Don't know

25. What percentage of people diagnosed with cancer are survivors?

- a. 47%
- b. 57%
- c. 67%
- d. 77%
- e. Don't know

26. Can early detection via screenings help prevent cancer from spreading or keep it under control?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Don't know