



Research Briefing

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Periodic Prompts and Reminders

Objective

To investigate, through a systematic literature review, the effectiveness of periodic prompts and reminders in health promotion interventions.

Background

Increasingly, health behavior interventions are incorporating prompts and reminders (also known as limited contact interventions) as a method of encouraging healthy behavior, but little is known about their effectiveness.

The review included 19 articles published between 1988 and 2008 (17 of these were published after 2000). The main intervention components examined were prompt frequency, medium used, tailoring, and level of interaction involved with the intervention, and other intervention components involved.

Findings

Although research results were not always consistent and conclusive, there is evidence to support the potential of prompts and reminders to impact health behavior; 11 of the 19 articles reviewed appeared to have

positive results with associated prompts and reminders.

There is some evidence that increased prompt frequency is more effective. For example, one study found that weekly prompting was more effective in encouraging walking than prompting provided at three week intervals. The communication method of prompts and reminders (e.g., email vs. mail) did not appear to influence effectiveness, unless communication involved telephone interaction with a counselor or coach (in which case, effectiveness appeared to improve).

The impact of tailoring alone was difficult to assess in existing studies. Tailored interventions were often compared to no intervention, rather than tailored information being compared versus non-tailored information. The exception was tailored periodic prompts delivered through regular contact with a counselor, where positive results were found.

Implications

Prompts and reminders are an important

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component of Ix, both on their own and as part of other interventions, including health behavior interventions. Although there is general evidence supporting the effectiveness of prompts and reminders, it is possible that their effectiveness may be maximized through tailored interventions that include stage of behavior change and personal preferences.

There may be individual differences in timing preferences. Also, frequency of

messaging also might differ depending on how ready the individual is to engage in behavior change. More research is needed to understand these variations.

Citation

Fry JP, Neff RA. 2009. Periodic Prompts and Reminders in Health Promotion and Health Behavior Interventions: Systematic Review. *J Med Internet Res*, 11(2),e16. <http://www.jmir.org/2009/2/e16/> 117-130.

Cancer Survivorship Care Plans

Objective

To investigate interest in and willingness of cancer survivors and health care providers to use an online tool to create individualized survivorship care plans.

Background

Between 1971 and 2001, the number of cancer survivors living in the U.S. tripled. In 2005, the Institute of Medicine recognized the lack of available comprehensive care for cancer survivors and recommended health care providers provide patients with a follow-up plan for their health, also referred to as a ‘survivorship care plan.’

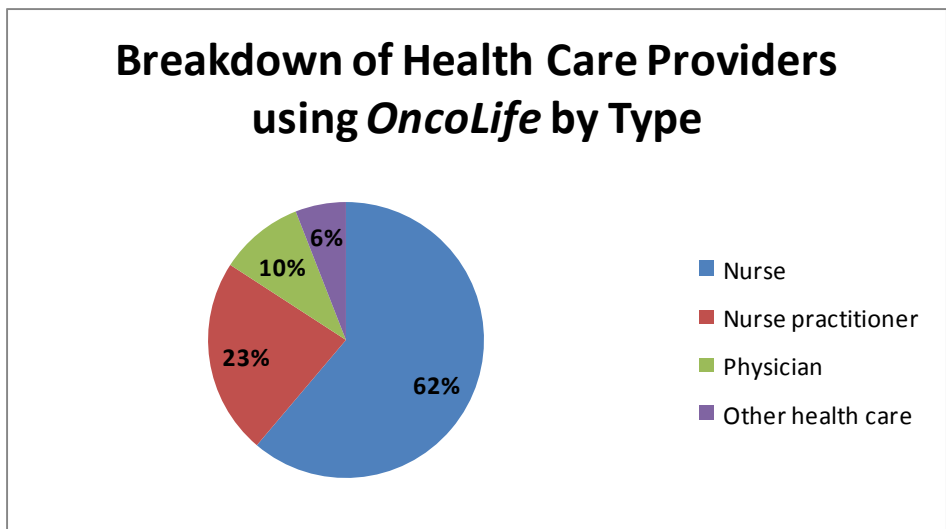
The University of Pennsylvania created *OncoLife*, an open access tool with the capacity to create cancer survivorship care plans via the web. During the study period, the tool was refined based on iterative feedback from cancer survivors and clinicians.

Findings

Based on usage of the tool, cancer survivors and health care providers seem receptive to using an online tool to

create cancer survivorship plans. The majority of users (71.3%) were women and a large portion of users (45%) were breast cancer survivors. Based on surveys conducted with a subset of users, satisfaction with the tool was high for both patients and health care providers, with 90% of users reporting satisfaction levels of “good” and “excellent.”

Users of the tool were patients (64.2%), family members or friends (12.4%), and health care providers (24.8%). Of the health care providers, the majority (85%) of users were nurses or nurse practitioners.



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Only a small portion of *OncoLife* users (12%) reported having received survivorship information prior to using the tool.

IxImplications

Cancer survivorship care plans fill a significant Ix gap for cancer survivors. The *OncoLife* survivorship care plan provides information, including health risks that may result from cancer therapies, that is otherwise not easily or quickly accessible.

The *OncoLife* survivorship care plan could potentially be incorporated into existing health systems and processes. For example, oncologists could use *OncoLife* survivorship care plans routinely for post-treatment planning. Also, the plan, or

information on how to create the plan, could be automatically delivered to patients meeting certain criteria; this functionality could be built into existing electronic medical records (EMR) systems.

Last, but certainly not least, the significant role nurses can play in providing information therapy to patients should not be overlooked.

Citation

Hill-Kayser CE, et al. 2009. An Internet Tool for Creation of Cancer Survivorship Care Plans for Survivors and Health Care Providers: Design, Implementation, Use and User Satisfaction. *J Med Internet Res*, 11(3),e39. <http://www.jmir.org/2009/3/e39/>

Tailored Messaging

Objective

To determine, through a meta-analysis, which message approaches and individual characteristics affect intentions to comply with health recommendations.

Background

Although there is growing recognition of the need to tailor information to different segments of the population, there is little guidance available to guide the design of health messaging. A meta-analysis was conducted on results reported in 60 published and unpublished health communications studies. Relationships between messaging tactics and individual characteristics were examined.

Findings

The findings of the meta-analysis generally supported results found in previous health communications studies. For example, emphasizing social and physical consequences in an emotional format to enhance health intentions

tends to be effective for broad audiences.

To the degree possible, messages should be tailored to specific audiences. For example, the findings suggest that older audiences are more likely to be moved to action by messages promoting detection of health issues, rather than prevention or remedial behaviors. While emotional messaging emphasizing personal consequences tends to be effective for female audiences, male audiences tend to respond better to unemotional messages.

Differences were also found between black and white audiences. Messages emphasizing personal consequences using a vivid format tend to work with white audiences. For nonwhite audiences, social consequences and non-vivid formats appear to resonate more strongly.

IxImplications

Research on message tailoring can inform the practice of Ix. Use existing research findings, like those above, as a starting

point to determine the approaches that may work best with your unique audience. Since there are multiple dimensions that can be used for tailoring, consider conducting focus groups with people representing your clients/users/audience.

In addition to race, gender, and age differences, other differences (such as regional differences) also play a role.

Experiment and learn from what works with your audience. Plan to refine and improve your approach over time.

Citation

Keller, P.A. and Donald R. Lehmann. 2008. Designing Effective Health Communications: A Meta-Analysis. American Marketing Association, 27(2), 117-130.



Next IxInsights Webinar

Video-based Ix

November 17, 2009, 3-4pm ET