

Effective Communication on Tobacco Product Risk and FDA Authority

Enhancing Source Credibility in Tobacco Regulatory Communications (Project 3)

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Abstract:

Under the Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act (Tobacco Control Act), the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has regulatory authority over tobacco product manufacture, marketing, and distribution. The FDA seeks to foster new communications research on tobacco regulation. The Center for Regulatory Research on Tobacco Communication (CRRTC) addresses communication components of the FDA's Center for Tobacco Products (CTP) messaging by: a) determining factors that influence public perceptions of information sources (e.g., the FDA), b) exploring ways to engage tobacco users, c) investigating communication issues within vulnerable populations, and d) evaluating how source message characteristics impact tobacco use. The study aims of this research are to 1) characterize perceptions of FDA tobacco regulation, 2) examine variations in message frames (i.e., source sponsor, source depiction, and source engagement) that increase source credibility (i.e., trustworthiness) of tobacco regulation messaging, and 3) assess the degree to which optimizing source credibility affects behavioral intentions. Aim 1 will characterize perceptions of the FDA regulatory authority, credibility, and tobacco control communication campaigns among adolescents, young adults and adults, and vulnerable populations (Black and gay, lesbian, and bisexual (GLB)). We will conduct seven focus groups with members of these populations in North Carolina (NC) to assess existing perceptions of the FDA. We will conduct a national, cross-sectional survey in years 2 and 4 to collect data from 3800 young adult and adult tobacco users and non-users, and 800 adolescents. The survey will collect data to monitor changes in public perceptions of the FDA, and determine which source sponsors are deemed most credible. Aim 2 will examine determinants of source credibility in FDA regulatory communication messages to create and test optimally framed messages with current smokers. We will conduct 10 focus groups with young adult, adult, Black and GLB smokers to design communication messages with high source credibility. Multiple combinations of source credibility determinants will be reduced to two optimal message frames. Using a within-subjects experimental design and eye-tracking technology, we will interview 300 NC young adult, adult, Black and GLB smokers to determine if optimally framed messages improve message effectiveness compared to sub-optimally framed messages. Aim 3 will use a randomized control trial of 352 young adult and adult smokers to test the impact of optimally framed FDA cigarette constituent messages on intentions to quit. We hypothesize that FDA messages with optimal source credibility will lead to stronger behavioral intentions compared to messages with sub-optimal source credibility.