

The Effect of Public Figure Health Narratives through Social Media Regarding HPV: An Application of the Elaboration Likelihood Model

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Background:

HPV, the Genital Human Papillomavirus, the most common STD that may cause cancers of the cervix, vagina, penis, or anus, according to the CDC, has been overlooked by society due to a lack of knowledge and stigma surrounding STDs. On August 17 2014, Melissa Mark-Viverito, New York City Council speaker, announced her infection with HPV via her Twitter account. After the series of tweets, her health narrative gained an outpouring of support on Twitter.

Purpose:

The purpose of this research was to explore:

- (1) How effective public figure health narratives are in regards to enhance the awareness of HPV and increase its vaccination rate.
- (2) The relationship between degrees of involvement with knowledge of HPV and the effectiveness of public figure health narratives across media platforms.

Methods:

This study applied the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), using a 2X2X2 factorial design to conduct an online between-groups experiment on Amazon Mechanical Turk with 275 female participants who were at least 18 years old but not more than 26 years old, and had not received the HPV vaccine.

Results:

- ü **(H1)** Public figure health narratives will be more effective in enhancing individuals' intentions to receive the HPV vaccine than campaigns without endorsements when there is low-issue involvement with HPV.
- û **(H2)** Public figure health narratives will be more effective in motivating individuals to receive the vaccine if the message appears in their social media account.
- ü **(RQ1)** Public figure health narratives in newspapers has the largest effect in motivating individuals to receive the vaccine for people who are highly involved in the HPV issue.

Conclusions:

Consistent with the previous studies, for individuals who are not familiar with HPV issues, the peripheral route as proposed by ELM would be a more effective approach to change their behavioral intentions to receive the vaccine. However, the results also indicated that for individuals who are highly involved with HPV, public figure health narratives are also more effective than non-narrative messages to change participants' intentions, contrary to the prediction of ELM. In addition, the narratives appearing in newspapers are still more effective in encouraging them to get vaccinated than are the messages from public figures posted on social media accounts. That is, the credibility of information sources outweighs the para-social relationships in social media for individuals when it comes to a controversial and serious disease.