

Making a Difference in Men's Health

A Marketer's Call to Action



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Historically, most hospitals and health systems have largely ignored men in their marketing and business development efforts, focusing instead on women. Now, recognizing that men have unmet health needs and can offer new revenue streams, more healthcare organizations are introducing services that can not only make an impact on men's health, but also expand the organization's reach and customer base in new ways.

Consider these statistics: over 90 percent of women have a primary care physician, compared with only 62 percent of men. And, excluding pregnancy-related office visits, women see their doctors for preventive care twice as often and use ambulatory care services 33 percent more often than men do. Not surprisingly, women now live, on average, five to six years longer than men.

For African American, Hispanic, and Native American men, the disparity in health status is particularly alarming. They are at even higher risk for overall poor health, for the top 10 major diseases, and for premature death and disability.

So, why don't men visit doctors more often? It's not simply a matter of insurance. Although more than half (55 percent) of the 38.4 million uninsured American adults are men, evidence indicates that even insured men are not taking care of their health. The fact is that men simply tend to avoid preventive care and seek services only when they are "really sick." Regardless of race, ethnicity or insurance status, they are raised to be "strong." In healthcare, that is translating into an alarming lack of attention to preventive health needs.

An Emerging Movement for Men's Health

Although the momentum for connecting men and boys with healthcare in the U.S. is just beginning, several healthcare organizations are leading the way in developing innovative approaches for reaching males and starting them on a new lifestyle trajectory where health and wellness are important. Crucially, these innovators also understand that men's health must be addressed differently from women's.

INTEGRIS Health

In 2004, INTEGRIS Health, a not-for-profit healthcare system with 15 hospitals throughout Oklahoma, began to focus on men and their access to physicians and healthcare as part of its community health initiative.

To raise awareness of men's health issues, INTEGRIS created the highly innovative Men's Health University (a.k.a. Men-U). Formed in 2004, Men-U meets men where they want to be met, in places that make them feel comfortable. Through free screenings, physician seminars, and annual wellness fairs, Men-U has brought more than



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700 men and healthcare workers together and has become a powerful advocate for men. Community organizations, radio stations, and local celebrities have all collaborated in this effort to transform unhealthy men into healthy ones.

Steve Petty, INTEGRIS System Director of Community Wellness, brought together a core team of INTEGRIS clinicians to develop the Men-U program. Key components include:

- ◆ Fit Club
- ◆ “ManCard,” which rewards points for taking action to get and stay healthy
- ◆ Physician outreach/talks to educate men about their health
- ◆ Physician clinics and convenient office hours
- ◆ “What a Dad” contests

What drove the success of the Men-U initiative was not just that it offered men free health checks and cancer screenings, but that it offered them in a tailgate party environment with food and door prizes, not in a doctor’s office. The “ManCards” points-reward system really resonated with men. And the local press got on board with lots of media attention and made health fun.

Most important, INTEGRIS engaged physicians to become Men’s Health Champions and lead the charge. According to **Justin Sparkes, MD**, INTEGRIS Medical Director for Community and Employee Wellness: “The whole challenge was getting as close to a 1:1 as possible. Men had to know why something like high blood pressure directly affects them. They simply needed to know that ‘I need my cholesterol checked, my PSA taken.’”

Hurley Medical Center

Three years ago, while looking for new ways to grow its patient base, Hurley Medical Center, Flint, MI, discovered men’s health as an important area of unmet need. None of the other area



hospitals were focusing on how to get men into the healthcare system, particularly African American men, so Hurley jumped at the opportunity.

Working with the community and churches as well as with physicians, Hurley developed a targeted Men’s Health Initiative. Through a series of breakfasts, workshops, and church events, men can receive health screenings, meet with physicians, and learn how to get and stay healthy.

Knowing that the experience of visiting a physician’s office is unappealing, and at times frightening, for men, the Men’s Health Initiative takes preventive health services out to them, in places where they are comfortable and like to hang out. The first Men’s Health Summit, “Man Up,” brought in more than 120 men and even some of their wives for screening, motivation, and education sessions. Hurley

was able to try some of the same ideas that INTEGRIS Health had used successfully, retooling them to fit its market.

Hurley also organized a very successful Men’s Health Fest filled with sporting events, contests, and an all-day appearance by local football star Mark Ingram Jr, a Heisman Trophy winner and former Flint Southwestern Academy player who now plays for the New Orleans Saints. More than 1,000 people came out to celebrate men’s health in ways that were engaging and fun, yet serious. The strategy was to make getting healthy easier, convenient, and more fun for men—in other words, a healthcare strategy designed around them.

Getting the message right was another key focus. Local research showed that taking care of their cars was more important to men than taking care of themselves. Accordingly, advertising for the men’s programs was designed to hit home in powerful yet simple ways with the message: “Think your car is more important than your health? Think again.”

Michigan Institute of Urology: MIU Men’s Health Foundation

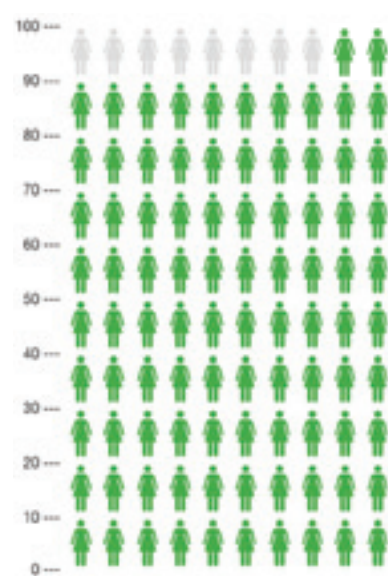
Three years ago, the Michigan Institute of Urology created the MIU Men’s Health

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Men with a primary care physician



Women with a primary care physician



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Foundation to focus on men. At the time, these urologists were concerned about prostate and testicular cancer screenings. African Americans had a high incidence of prostate cancer; were not getting screened early; and, as a result, had unnecessarily poor health outcomes.

To raise awareness of the problem, the doctors at MIU organized two different but highly effective events:

◆ The Father's Day 5K Run for the Ribbon has attracted more than 1,500 participants annually since its inception in 2009.

◆ A fall Men's Health Event, now in its third year, has attracted 1,000 attendees annually.

"We forgot that men have life-threatening issues we need to address," says

Michael Lutz, MD, one of the leaders of MIU's men's health outreach. "And we need to help them thrive, not just survive, if they get prostate or any other form of cancer."

What makes the MIU Foundation unusual is that it is a stand-alone entity, formed by physicians who are focusing on men's health. As such, it is attracting major community, corporate, and individual funding for research, as well as strong community involvement, all of which is helping the Foundation make an impact.

Time to Jump on the Bandwagon

These groundbreaking initiatives are the first steps of a growing movement to change the way healthcare executives think about men and their health, how institutions train clinicians to address men's health, and how healthcare providers deliver care in culturally and lifestyle-appropriate

ways to reach men. Forward-thinking healthcare strategists are drawing on these ideas to tailor programs and messages to reach men and to support women who are still major influences in the lives of their husbands, sons, and fathers. Indeed, now might be an ideal time for healthcare institutions to join together to champion men and their health and to come up with real, actionable ways to help them get—and stay—healthier.

Sources

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