Salsa y Salud: Increasing Healthy Lifestyle Awareness through a Radio-based Initiative

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INTRODUCTION

The Hispanic population, increasing in size, shows health differences when compared to other groups. In 2001, Hispanic persons, per 100,000 population, experienced more age-adjusted years of potential life lost before the age of 75 than non-Hispanic whites for stroke (18% more), chronic liver disease and cirrhosis (62%), diabetes (41%), HIV (168%), and homicide (128%).1 This is a concern, as Hispanic people are the largest minority group in the United States. In 2001, of the approximate 291 million total population in the United States, approximately 38 million were Hispanic, and approximately 17 million lived in Florida.2

As part of a grant received from Aetna, The University of North Florida, Department of Public Health developed a community media-based program specifically directed toward Hispanic individuals. This pilot program disseminated 2 series of twelve 30-second educational Public Service Announcements (PSAs) addressing the importance of healthy behaviors. The project, titled Salsa y Salud was based on social marketing theory.

TARGET POPULATION

The target population for the project was the Hispanic population over the age of 18 in northeastern Florida.

GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

The goal of the program was to increase awareness of the role of nutrition and physical activity in health promotion among Hispanic persons. The program had the following objectives: (1) create and implement two 3-month radio programs that included weekly health, nutrition, and physical activity messages; and (2) recruit 150 persons to participate in the program by listening to the weekly messages and completing a personal tracking form to receive the program incentives.

IMPLEMENTATION

Salsa y Salud (Salsa and Health) was based on social marketing theory. Social marketers attempt to modify the relative attractiveness of specific behavioral options through the use of incentives and other benefits that positively reinforce the desired behavior, and through the reduction of barriers or costs associated with the behavior considering the product, price, place, and promotion.3

Culturally specific messages were developed and delivered in 2 phases. The first phase, with 12 messages, aired from January 23rd to April 23rd, 2005, and the second phase, also with 12 messages, aired from April 24th through July 30th, 2005. The PSAs aired through Latino Hits 1160 AM, a local radio station, and each message was played for 1 week, 3 times a day, for a total of 21 repetitions per week, and a total of 504 messages by the end of the program (Table).

Three reinforcement tools were incorporated into the project: (1) a Web link (the radio messages were posted on the University’s Hispanic Council Web site); (2) publication of the radio spots in a Hispanic newspaper; and (3) participation in 5 local health fairs. As part of the promotional activities, about 1500 flyers and participation forms, which included guidelines, were delivered to local Hispanic businesses, stores, and churches. A participant (person who recorded the messages on a specific form) received a t-shirt and a $10.00 supermarket gift card.

EVALUATION

The participants were contacted through radio messages, health fairs, word of mouth, newspaper advertisements, and flyers posted in local Hispanic businesses. At the end of the program, participants filled out a survey with both qualitative and quantitative questions related to demographics, usefulness of the program, sources used by the participants to retrieve the messages, and their recommendations. Based on feedback, participants indicated, overall, that the messages received were beneficial and provided information on health issues specific to their needs.

CONCLUSION

The multiple daily airing of health messages using the ending “Salsa y Salud” theme gave the program and the university name recognition. Although the project coordinators could collect information on the numbers of radio listeners, it was difficult to get data on individual listeners’ participa-
tion and their perception of the actual messages. The specific use of radio messages by participants needs further exploration and creative approaches to determine outcome effectiveness. The following strategies may be of assistance in determining message efficacy: (1) increase the number of tracking forms delivered throughout the city (at least 5000); (2) create a Web site specific to the program, and refer to it during the airing of each health message; (3) participate in more live radio station interviews to promote the project; (4) publish messages in local Spanish-language newspapers; (5) upload messages to radio station Web pages; and (6) increase Hispanic project awareness among local health agencies and individuals.

REFERENCES

