Project Hope: Awareness Campaign

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Vice President, Corporate Relations
BlueCross BlueShield of Western New York

- Community-based, not for profit health plan
- Part of the BlueCross BlueShield Association
- Established in 1936
- Headquartered in Buffalo, New York
- 800,000+ members
- 1,800 employees
- HealthNow New York Inc. is parent company
Buffalo Niagara Region

- Buffalo is second largest city in the state of New York
- Urban, suburban and rural communities comprise the 8 county region
- City of Buffalo has 4th highest poverty rate in the nation (US Census Bureau)
- State of New York, Federal Government, State University at Buffalo (largest SUNY Campus), M&T Bank, Delaware North Companies, Moog, and region’s health systems are among the top employers
- Niagara Falls, New York is part of the region and home to Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station
- Currently enjoying an economic and cultural renaissance
“Our youth are dying”

- Today, 2,000 kids will use painkillers for the first time
- 44% of teens have at least one friend who abuses painkillers
- 25% of teens take painkillers prescribed to someone else
- 40% of teens think prescription painkillers are less dangerous than street drugs
- 15,000 people a year die from painkillers. More than half of abusers are between the ages of 12 and 25
- Transition from painkillers to Heroin is well documented
“Our youth are dying”

- It started with one BlueCross BlueShield member
- Parents of Michael Israel came to us after their son committed suicide
- Michael was “prescribed into addiction.”
- His father, an electrician, noted “I sat next to my son, and trusted that the doctor was prescribing safe medication. There were no warnings. I just didn’t know.”
- His plea: “Educate”
“Our youth are dying”
We tried to make a difference

- A community campaign – to stress the danger of painkiller addiction and provide access to treatment and support
- Outreach to the medical community – goal wasn’t to accuse physicians of wrongdoing
- We sought community and media buy-in
- Created a middle school-based curriculum
- Funded a compelling documentary (with local PBS affiliate WNED-TV) to launch more dialogue throughout the region
We tried to make a difference

- Launched a 24-7 hotline (with Horizon Health) that families could call for help
- Raised funds for the campaign, from the private sector and local foundations
- Established boundaries – we would educate, but not concentrate on advocacy in Albany or Washington
- Leveraged our “Blue brand” – the most trusted in health care – to step into an issue that wasn’t pleasant or “healthy”
Response

- Broad based support
- Everyone said yes
- Over $1.1 million of donated media inventory and resources
- $300,000 out-of-pocket funding by BCBS of WNY and local foundations
- “Everyone” had a story
“Project Hope”

- Continuing Medical Education (CME)
- 30-minute documentary — “Tragedy and Hope”
- Public service campaign: television, radio, on-line, social media, billboard, print advertising
- Curriculum and education for middle schools
- Information cards for pharmacies and doctors’ offices
- Aggressive public relations
- Unique website for one-stop resource and 24/7 hotline — www.painkillerskill.org
Campaign creative

PAINKILLERS KILL MORE THAN PAIN
painkillersKILL.org
Campaign creative
Tragedy and Hope

Help save lives & spread awareness

I pledge to not abuse prescription painkiller
Information Cards

- Information cards distributed at Western New York pharmacies (Tops, Wegmans, Walgreens, Rite Aid Pharmacy)
- Endorsement by the Pharmacists’ Association of Western New York (PAWNY) comprised of 75 independently-owned pharmacies, doctors’ offices and schools
- Available in physician’s offices
- Distributed by the Western New York Labor Council
Goals of Painkillers Kill campaign

- Increase awareness and provide education to the medical community
- Increase awareness of the issue to the community-at-large
- Increase awareness and education, and provide resources to parents and young adults
Impact of initial campaign

Awareness

- 2 in 3 consumers recall seeing the campaign
- Of those, 72% stated that the information provided increased their awareness of the effects of painkillers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Disagree (1,2)</th>
<th>Neutral (3)</th>
<th>Agree (4,5)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Easy to understand the message</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased my awareness of the effects of painkillers</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helped me learn more about the effects of painkillers</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>61%</td>
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Impact of initial campaign

Education

- 95% of consumers recognize that prescription painkillers are highly addictive
- One-third stated painkillers are a synthetic form of heroin
Impact of initial campaign

Action taken
- Over 1 in 3 consumers took action, most often by:
  - Discussing with friends and/or family
  - Discarding expired medications

- Discussed topic with friends or family: 19%
- Discarded my expired prescription drugs: 18%
- Talked to my child/children about the subject: 9%
- Visited painkillersKILL.org: 3%
- Other, please specify: 3%
- I have not done anything: 62%
Impact of initial campaign

- Community Relations Campaign of the Year, PRWeek Awards, March 2015.
- Community Service Award, Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Providers of New York State (ASAP), October 2014.
- Community Outreach Campaign of the Year, Healthcare Marketing IMPACT Awards presented by Modern Healthcare and Advertising Age, September 2014.
There’s more to be done
There’s more to be done

- 147 fatal opioid-related overdoses in 2015 alone, with Erie County health officials predicting 275 fatalities by year's end.
- According to The Buffalo News, number of deaths countywide last year was 128, meaning this year’s totals have already surpassed the amount of overdoses in 2014.
- The Erie County Health Department also reported that between 2012 and 2014 there were 331 fatal opiate overdoses.
- Since last year, local treatment facilities report opiate and heroin overdoses are up over 480% in Buffalo.
There’s more to be done

Daniel
Niagara Falls

Michael
Buffalo

Adrianne
Buffalo
Next steps

National PBS documentary, produced by WNED

BlueCross BlueShield Association
BlueCross BlueShield
of Western New York