NHS Give Blood Campaign as a Health Communication Intervention

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Introduction

The essay is based on the NHS Campaign “NHS Blood and Transplant: Give Blood” in the United Kingdom. This campaign is for managing blood donations and encouraging people to keep up with their blood and organ donation commitments, while following necessary precautions regarding their medicinal requirements, travel, and health conditions. According to the World Health Organization document on Blood Safety and Availability (2023), blood transfusion helps save lives and improves health outcomes. Unfortunately, many patients who require transfusion worldwide usually do not have access to safe blood on time. Providing patients with sufficient and safe blood should be essential to every country’s national healthcare policy and infrastructure. Since blood cannot be stored for long periods before use, there is a constant requirement for regular donations of blood. Regular blood donation helps to ensure that blood is available when required (World Health Organization, 2022). This campaign aims to encourage people to donate their blood to patients in dire need of it.

A mobile application has been launched for this campaign to reach the public (NHS Blood and Transplant, 2023). This is targeted at the healthy and young population of the UK, with the aim of helping to recruit new blood donors, and motivating the existing donors towards making regular donations. Other strategies like social media platforms and website campaigns were also used to communicate health awareness, but the mobile application will be the focus of this report. The health communication message is to encourage young and healthy people to donate blood.

The Rationale for Choice of Intervention

Increasing citizens’ interest in blood donation has been one of the primary functions of NHS Blood and Transplant campaign. This is because blood donation and blood supply are among the most important health services the NHS delivers. The message is being communicated using mobile applications. The number of smartphone users globally in 2021 was around 3.8 billion (Potgieter and Rensleigh, 2022). Mobile phones can provide a new channel for the health campaigns to have further reach to citizens, thus helping to promote healthy behaviour (Ahmed and Bates, 2016). Messages are also being customised through interactive interventions. Hence, this intervention was chosen due to its relevance in the current time with mobile phones being used for health interventions and promotions

due to the dynamic way they can form connections with the target population (Ahmed and Bates, 2016). Communication and data-based technologies are available through the mobile application for recording fine-grained data that will help learn about the users and their interactions (Lumsden, 2008).

Effective communication and the adoption of new ideas are important factors in the programmes for health promotion in society. The health communicators must decide their core intention through this communication strategy, considering whether they plan to inform, engage, or persuade the target audience via the program. In this instance, the project aims to find the opportunity to engage the existing donors and persuade potential new donors to donate blood (Bunton, Macdonald, and Macdonald, 2003). This mobile application helps the organisation reach out to more of the population. So, this was chosen as an intervention method to reach out to a large part of the population in the United Kingdom at once. This application allows effective appointment scheduling, receiving requirement notifications, learning about the blood type, checking donation milestones, and being aware of the other relevant information while working to be a donor. This provides convenience to the donors and helps them make informed decisions about blood donation. The awareness spread through this application can engage the donors through their improved understanding of the need and impact of their blood donations. Traditionally, direct mail and phone calls have been used to communicate with blood donors (Miah, 2022). However, this new communication strategy can effectively increase interest towards blood donation, especially when the organisation uses high-credibility sources. The mobile application's continuous use can help manage the database better, allowing a more persuasive communication strategy that the organisation can utilise to reach the target of blood donations in the UK.

Critical Discussion of the Application of Theories and Frameworks

Communication

Northouse and Northouse's model of Health Communication can be used as a health communication model that can help with analysing application of theories and frameworks used for health promotion.

The health communication model is based on the concept that professionals and clients bring unique factors into the relationship in health behaviour. The health-related interactions between clients and professionals in the healthcare sector can affect health outcomes. This can involve verbal as well as non-verbal behavioural aspects of communication. Both types of communication play an important role in delivering health outcomes, and health transactions are especially more effective when the non-verbal and the verbal factors in the messages align with each other. The settings under which health communication occurs; i.e., the setting under which the clients receive the message being delivered to them, are also important (Berry, 2006). This campaign uses non-verbal communication

through notifications from the application that can help meet the client's requirements. According to Aaker and Akutsu (2009), this kind of communication can help trigger empathy, interest and willingness towards donating blood to help society. Also, the application helps them get cues regarding how the rest of their social group has also been engaging in these activities, thus influencing them to make decisions that will help them be more interested in preserving their identities. This is also supported by the social cognitive theory, which focuses on other people's experiences that users can see and wish to replicate in their own lifestyles. Since people do not live in social isolation, they usually tend to have their strength of collectiveness rooted in the concept of collective effectiveness in overcoming collective problems (Farmer et al., 2018). In this case, users are likely to be motivated through the application to engage in blood donation activities as the rest of the society members are also using the application and engaging in this kind of activity.

However, communication of the users with the mobile application could be affected by their concerns regarding privacy and security of their data (Khan, Ahmed and Sen 2021). The collection of personal information from the users of the application regarding their donation behaviour could cause them to not be adequately invested in the health transactions that they undertake. This would require further reinforcement of the privacy and security of the application, and maintenance of transparency with the client.

Education

The different stages of change in the attitudes of the target audience through health communication also need to be considered for the health education of the users, based on the Cabanero-Verzosa model of health education which shows that the learning needs of individuals differ according to the stage at which the individual is learning. This model shows that the awareness level of the learners can define the strategies that need to be taken to educate them regarding the health needs.

According to Tones and Green (2004), users unaware of the blood donation campaign and the need for blood donation require developing awareness regarding the problem and the potential solutions to the need for donating blood. Persons who are aware and concerned require more motivation and self-awareness regarding the need for blood donations. Individuals who are motivated to change require the development of skills and logistical information that will help the users learn how to donate blood and where to donate the blood. The individuals who already try new behaviour require more information and awareness regarding the benefits of blood donation, and knowledge of how to solve problems to reduce the challenges of blood donation. The individuals who consistently display new behaviour also require a reinforcing awareness of the benefits of blood donation. This is done through this application as it encourages existing donors to complete their blood donation regularly.

However, lack of health literacy could hinder the ability of potential blood donors to use the application to its full potential as well, due to the possible inability to use digital technologies. The attitudes of the population regarding the use of healthcare services with integrated technologies

require e-health literacy to be developed (Zolbin, Huvila and Nikou 2022). Without health education, it could be difficult to reach certain segments of the population using the mobile application.

Critical Assessment of Psychological Theory in Communication for Behaviour Change

Behaviour Change

The Health Belief Model is a model that is used for explaining and estimating several behaviours regarding health. Beliefs are important for the Health Belief Model since it involves considering several beliefs associated with the health behaviour, including beliefs regarding exposure to illnesses and the intensity of these illnesses.

According to Warwick-Booth, Cross and Lowcock (2021), the health belief model may help make predictions or demonstrations regarding potential changes in behaviour. In this case, it is implied that the users are likely to act on specific factors when they perceive something to be threatening to their health. Also, the users are then likely to have faith in the effectiveness of the behaviour that is recommended via this campaign and learn about the potential benefits that can help outweigh the potential challenges. This campaign shows potential challenges by allowing accurate data to be provided to the clients, addressing the process of safety that needs to be maintained for the donation, and how the donation could positively impact the people. This could be their cue for action. Learning about their health conditions, travels, and so on can also help them be aware of the potential barriers to blood donation, allowing them to make informed decisions. This suggests that the mobile application can assist clients in making valuable decisions.

Individuals' attitudes are dependent on emotional, cognitive, and behavioural factors, as claimed by Stainton Rogers (2011). The comprehension of people and their views towards blood donations forms the foundation of the cognitive components of the attitude. The mobile application can aid in changing this attitude towards blood donation. Learning about the person's attitudes towards blood donation is one of the emotional components of the health communication behaviour. Donors with prior adverse experiences were found to have a lower probability of returning to blood donation. Adverse events may cause the donors to face higher anxiety regarding blood donations (Hoogerwerf et al., 2015). Thus, the emotional elements of the attitude towards blood donation can be influenced by the accurate and reliable information the application provides to the clients. The behavioural components include analysis of the prior behaviour and the behavioural intentions for blood donation. The theory of planned behaviour says that performing or not performing a behaviour is a function of the important beliefs relevant to the individual. Tracking past behaviour regarding donations and the milestones for the donations could help predict further behaviours regarding the donations that the clients make (Holdershaw, Gendall and Wright, 2011). However, according to Yu et al. (2018), the digital divide between segments of the population can cause the adoption of information and

communication technology like the mobile applications to be challenging. This could be due to the lack of educational, financial, psychological, and cognitive resources that could motivate the adoption of these new technologies. The digital divide could cause anxiety regarding the technology acceptance, thus making it difficult for the clients to use the mobile application.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the mobile application of Give Blood by NHS could help improve the possibility of the organisation reaching the target for blood donations. This report found that the individuals' attitudes and the kind of motivation they receive can affect their behaviours regarding blood donation. The mobile application is effective due to the increased smartphone penetration, which has helped reach more people for blood donations in the United Kingdom. However, the application still has limitations regarding the privacy and security of the data from the users regarding their blood donation behaviours. Also, the digital divide and lack of health literacy could cause the users to feel threatened regarding the adoption of the mobile application. The digital divide could exacerbate the health inequalities in the population being targeted by the application. These need to be addressed through training of the target population regarding the use of the technologies. Also, transparency needs to be improved in the application to address the privacy and security concerns of the population.

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