

**MINISTRY OF HEALTH**  
**HEALTHY LIVING PROMOTION TEAM**  
**SALT/SODIUM REDUCTION MEDIA COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY**

**Introduction**

With the ever-increasing burden of disease related to hypertension, it has been decided that one of the goals of the Healthy Living Promotion thrusts of the Ministry of Health will be the launching of a minor campaign on the reduction of sodium intake. The rationale for selecting sodium in this instance is that sodium consumption is believed to be high in The Bahamas. This reflects the global picture. With most consumed foods arising from processed selections, it is important to realize that the control of added salt – at the table or during cooking, historically does not constitute the main source. Processed foods with hidden sodium content is said globally to be the primary source. A salt reduction/sodium reduction media campaign will therefore speak to the increasing the awareness of sodium and the role it plays on one’s health.

**Objectives**

The objectives of the media campaign for the salt/sodium reduction are articulated as follows:-

- a. Explaining what exactly is sodium;
- b. Informing on the relationship between sodium and salt;
- c. Listing the dangers of a high sodium and salt diet;
- d. Giving information on how to determine sodium intake; and
- e. Providing strategies on what can be done to reduce sodium intake.

**Audiences**

Through research on international literature and articles on the important considerations for a sodium reduction campaign, it was noted that the most influential group of individuals who will provide the response necessary to effect the change desired are female care providers. These individuals care for the elderly – those who are in most cases already afflicted by hypertension and have challenges with disease management; themselves; their spouses and their children. They also determine meal choices as they purchase food for the home and prepare food for the family.

Given the reality that the Bahamian experience reflects the reality that persons are becoming diagnosed with non-communicable diseases at earlier ages, the Healthy Living Promotion team also concluded that adolescents and young adults, who have greater autonomy in selecting their meals, should be a secondary target. In the Bahamian context, these groups of individuals purchase their own meals, are very influential among their peers, influence the food choices of their younger siblings and in most cases also impact the food choices of the entire family.

**Messages**

Having identified the targeted audiences, the Healthy Living Promotion team identified the most probable methods of communicating with these selected groups. To fine-tune the menu of options, focus groups sessions were held with persons from the selected demographics to ensure that the team’s proposed approach reflected methods that would meet with success.

It was determined that each message have at least three components – identify the threat, list how the threat affects health and provide advice as to how to reduce threat.

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**Tools and activities**

Though a fair amount of female care providers still obtained their information through the traditional mode of radio message, the younger groups favoured emails, text messaging, FaceBook and Twitter, and other social media avenues. Messages were therefore crafted and tested with the groups to match the desires of the groups engaged.

To begin the campaign therefore, two radio messages were recorded – each lasting for 30 seconds. Also, available posters on the World Health Organization website were tested and adapted to reflect the input from the focus groups. Text messages were created also from these posters, and it was determined that the posters selected, redesigned or adapted would double as FaceBook posts as well as wall-mounted posters in community clinics and handouts.

**Resources and timescales**

It is no secret that media campaigns can be an expensive undertaking using traditional avenues of radio, print and television. However, given the need to reach the primary target audience of female care givers across the age spectrum and also across the archipelago, it was determined that this approach was necessary. Cost savings could be realized through the use of culturally unique methods – such as the community pages on channels 12 and 40 as well as through existing partnerships with the private sector.

The strategy for the PSAs is as follows

- a. Broadcast on the ZNS radio network (because of its national coverage) during the news segments at 7:30 am, 1 pm and 6 pm. Two 30-second spots during each segment on weekdays for a total of ten spots weekly. The duration of ten weeks in the first instance with a reduced pace until the end of the year at one per period. Initially, both messages (30 seconds each) will be aired with the Salt PSA1 airing during the morning and midday news cycles, and Salt PSA2 airing during the evening news cycle. The proposed cost for this is \$11,120.00.
- b. Broadcast on Guardian Talk Radio during the “Let’s Talk Live” radio talk show aired from 10 am to 1 pm. The proposed cost for this is \$3,225.00 ;
- c. Broadcast on Love 97FM three times a day in addition to airing during “Issues of The Day” which hosted between 11:30am and 1pm for two months. The proposed cost for this is \$5,052.50 .
- d. Broadcast on Y98.7 FM between 6 am – 10 am and 10 am - 2 pm for eight times per week for eight weeks. The proposed cost for this is \$2,339.20.
- e. Broadcast on JOY FM 101.9 between 6 am – 10 am and 10 am - 2 pm for eight times per week for eight weeks. The proposed cost for this is \$4,348.16.

Two Face Book posts have been created, (a third is under development) to be posted on staff members' pages and also given to the focus group members for posting on their pages with simple straightforward messages (see attachments). This will be at no cost.

Four posters from the WHO selection (one adapted) to be printed and placed in selected community clinics at a cost of \$666.50.

The same images will be posted on the community channels. Cable 12 is at no cost. ZNS Community page is \$860.00 for two months.

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The final thrust would be to work with both FAS Wallace and Mr. Maura to schedule talk show/morning show appearances to speak about the relationship of salt and sodium with hypertension, heart disease and stroke, with the daily limit as recommended by WHO.

**Evaluation and amendment**

Feedback will be obtained through the usual channels until the Ministry is able to resource other more dynamic avenues for receiving feedback from the community. In addition, a brief feedback survey instrument will be used during the proposed Caribbean Wellness Week of activities.

**References**

1. The Overseas Development Institute. <http://www.odi.org/publications/5186-communications-strategy-planning>
2. World Health Organization