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Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

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Entertainment Education

2000 Porter Novelli Healthstyles Survey

Prime Time Viewers and Health Information

APHA Executive Summary, October 24, 2001

Introduction

Analysis of the 2000 Porter Novelli HealthStyles database was conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The dataset consists of responses from 28 items that describe the characteristics of prime time TV viewers, and the effects of health content from TV storylines on their learning about health and actions taken. This summary also includes comparisons between regular viewers of daytime and prime time TV shows.

The Porter Novelli HealthStyles survey is one of a pair of linked postal mail surveys sent to a sample of adults ages 18 and older, which is drawn to be nationally representative on seven U.S. Census Bureau demographic characteristics. The first survey is a consumer survey in which data on general media habits, product use, interests, and lifestyle are collected. The second survey, HealthStyles, is administered to respondents to the first survey in which data on health attitudes, behaviors, conditions, in which information seeking are collected. HealthStyles is a proprietary database product developed by Porter Novelli, a social marketing and public relations firm. The survey was conducted in October and November of 2000 with 2,353 respondents.

Key Findings

More than four out of five (84%) Americans watch **prime time** TV shows at least a few times a month and half (50%) are regular viewers, i.e. viewers who watch two or more times a week. Among *regular viewers* who are nearly evenly represented across gender, age, income, education and racial groups:

- More than half (52%) report they trust the health information in the shows to be accurate and about one-fourth (26%) say **prime time** entertainment TV shows are among their top three sources for health information
- Nearly half (47%) report learning from **prime time** TV shows, about the same rate as those who report learning from daytime TV shows (48%)
- Nearly half (48%) of viewers report taking action after hearing about a health topic in a TV show (34% for daytime viewers)

Among Black women who are *regular viewers*:

- Nearly two-thirds (63%) report the highest rates of all groups for learning about health from **prime time** shows (69% for daytime)
- More than half (57%) report telling someone about it, one-fifth (21%) report visiting health care places, and 14% report calling for health information after hearing about a health topic in a **prime time** TV show.
- About one-third (34%) report telling someone to do something or did something themselves to prevent a problem after hearing about it on a daytime TV show.

Implications

The Healthstyles findings suggest **prime time** TV storylines serve a critical health education service when they provide accurate, timely information about disease, injury and disability in their storylines for the vast majority of U.S. citizens who watch at least a few times a month, and particularly for the 102 million people who are *regular viewers* i.e. viewers who watch two or more times a week. Since audience reach is broad and effects are very strong among women of color who have a disproportionate burden of risk for preventable diseases – such as STDs, heart disease and certain birth defects – the shows provide a critical channel for easily understood prevention information for these audiences. When even a small percentage of viewers take action as the result of a TV storyline, to protect or improve their own health or the health of someone they know, millions of people and their families can benefit. If a show fails to convey accurate information, or portrays risky behavior without the associated health consequences, viewers may suffer negative effects as well.

The weekly format of **prime time** entertainment TV shows allows audiences to develop familiarity with regular characters, and identification with characters they perceive to be like themselves. Behavioral scientists have demonstrated that this type of identification enhances learning and prevention – because audience members are inclined to model desirable behavior and avoid undesirable behavior, based on the experiences of characters they have come to know.

Writers and producers of TV storylines that address public health and safety issues may want to consider:

- Topics that impact a lot of people (e.g. teens/smoking, women/heart disease, or children/vaccines)
- Prevention information delivered or modeled by credible characters (e.g. checking the smoke alarm, using a seat belt, taking a daily vitamin, getting a flu vaccine, or exercising)
- Continuing storylines that explore the impact of disease, injury and disability on people's lives
- Characters with negative beliefs and poor health practices suffering the consequences

- Challenges and struggles these characters face in making changes, and the positive outcomes that result when they choose more positive beliefs and practices
- Storylines with characters who have health limitations or impairment, but practice healthy behaviors that contribute to their quality of life

Summary of Findings

(Sample Size: 2,353 Respondents)

Frequency of Daytime Drama Viewing By Audiences

More than four out of five (84%) of all respondents report they watch **prime time** entertainment TV shows (like *ER*, *The Practice*, *Touched By An Angel*, *Everybody Loves Raymond*) at least a few times a month:

- Half of all respondents (50%) are *regular viewers*, i.e. viewers who watch two or more times a week
- Nearly half of *regular viewers* (24% of all respondents) watch four or more times a week

Regular **prime time** viewing is reported by:

- 52% of females and 48% of males
- 52% of whites, 48% of Blacks, and 34% of Hispanics
- 51% of those ages 18-29, 52% of ages 30-64, and 40% of ages 65 and above
- 48% of those with HS or less education, and 51% with some college or more
- 52% of those with income under \$20K, 49% between \$20K-\$50K, and 50% with \$50K and above

Prime Time Entertainment TV Shows as a Source for Learning about Health
Regular viewers report the places they heard about health information they trusted to be accurate in the past year are shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1. Top three choices of <i>regular viewers</i> for learning about diseases and how to prevent them				
	All	White	Black	Hispanic
TV news/news magazine shows	77%	77%	77%	83%
Newspaper	72%	73%	72%	68%
Health care provider	69%	68%	75%	68%
Friends/family	62%	63%	58%	69%
Prime time entertainment TV shows	52%	51%	62%	52%
Radio	32%	30%	50%	29%

Internet	30%	30%	31%	21%
Hotlines	3%	2%	11%	4%

The places noted most often (top three choices) by *regular viewers* for learning about diseases and how to prevent them in the past year are shown in Table 2 below:

Table 2. Top three choices of *regular viewers* for learning about diseases and how to prevent them

	All	White	Black	Hispanic
TV news/news magazine shows	63%	63%	68%	65%
Newspaper	53%	53%	60%	40%
Health care provider	52%	52%	51%	45%
Friends/family	40%	41%	35%	35%
Prime time entertainment TV shows	26%	23%	42%	27%
Radio	14%	13%	21%	12%
Internet	18%	18%	12%	19%
Hotlines	1%	1%	1%	0%

Nine out of ten (90%) *regular viewers* report they learned something about diseases or how to prevent them (like AIDS, cancer, diabetes, asthma, etc.) from one or more of the following TV programs in the past year:

- News/news magazine shows (79%)
- Documentary specials (47%)
- Medical/health shows (39%)
- **Prime time** entertainment TV shows (47%)
- Talk shows (35%)
- Soap operas (11%)

Nine out of ten (91%) women who are *regular viewers* report they learned something about diseases or how to prevent them from the TV shows listed above. Over half (51%) report they learned something about diseases from **prime time** entertainment TV shows:

- 49% of white women
- 63% of Black women
- 46% of Hispanic women

Impact of Health Topics in Prime time Entertainment TV Shows: Actions

Taken

More than nine out of ten (92%) *regular viewers* heard something about a health issue or disease on **prime time** TV shows in the past year and nearly half (48%) took one or more actions as a result:

- 16% told someone to do something or did something themselves (like use a condom or exercise more) to prevent the health problem
- 42% told someone about the story or health topic
- 9% visited a clinic or doctor
- 5% called a clinic, health care place or hotline number for information

About the same proportion of women who are *regular viewers* (93%) heard something about a health issue or disease on **prime time** TV shows in the past year and more than half (54%) took one or more actions as a result:

Table 3. Actions taken by regular viewers of prime time TV shows				
	All	White	Black	Hispanic
Told someone about the story or health topic	48%	48%	57%	46%
Told someone to do something or did something myself	17%	15%	21%	28%
Visited a clinic, doctor, or nurse	10%	8%	21%	11%
Called a clinic, health care place, or hotline number	6%	5%	14%	9%

Comparing Prime Time and Daytime Audiences

*Note: **Daytime** findings are based on data from the 1999 HealthStyles Survey. Percentages are reported for **prime time** vs. **daytime** regular viewers unless noted otherwise*

Prime time audiences are two-and-a-half times larger than daytime audiences:

- 84% vs. 33% of all respondents watch at least a few times a month
- 50% vs. 19% of all respondents watch two or more times a week (*regular viewers*)
- 24% vs. 12% of all respondents watch four or more times a week

With only a couple of exceptions, *regular viewers* of **prime time** are evenly represented across gender, racial, age, education and income groups while *regular viewers* of daytime have more representation among women, younger/older viewers, lower income/education groups, Blacks and Hispanics:

Table 4. Frequency of Prime time and Daytime Drama Viewing by Audiences		
	Prime time Viewers	Daytime Viewers

Race/Ethnicity		
Black	48%	31%
Hispanic	34%	25%
White	52%	17%
Gender		
Males	48%	12%
Females	52%	25%
Age		
18-29	51%	25%
30-64	52%	16%
65 and above	40%	20%
Income		
Under \$20K	52%	29%
\$20K to \$50K	49%	20%
\$50K and above	50%	12%
Education		
High school or less	48%	26%
Some college or above	51%	15%

Learning about diseases from a health storyline is reported by a larger percentage of regular **prime time** viewers than *regular daytime viewers* (47% vs. 41%); Black women report learning about health at the highest rates of both **prime time** and **daytime** groups:

- 51% vs. 53% of women who are *regular viewers* report learning
- 49% vs. 48% of white women report learning
- 63% vs. 69% of Black women report learning
- 46% vs. 56% of Hispanic women report learning

Taking action from a health storyline is reported by a larger percentage of regular **prime time** viewers than daytime viewers (48% vs. 34%), with discussion being the strongest effect:

- 42% vs. 25% of *regular viewers* told someone about the story or health topic
- 9% vs. 7% visited a clinic or doctor

- 16% vs. 16% of *regular viewers* told someone to do something or did something themselves to prevent the problem.
- 5% vs. 6% called a clinic, health care place or hotline number for more information

Women report taking action at even higher rates after viewing **prime time** and **daytime** health storylines (54% vs. 39%); Black women have the highest rates of reporting for these specific actions:

Table 5. Actions taken by women who are regular viewers of prime time and daytime TV dramas

	Prime time				Daytime			
	All	White	Black	Hispanic	All	White	Black	Hispanic
Told someone about the story or health topic	48%	48%	57%	46%	29%	26%	38%	31%
Told someone to do something or did something myself	17%	15%	21%	28%	15%	10%	29%	24%
Visited a clinic, doctor, or nurse	10%	8%	21%	11%	7%	4%	16%	13%
Called a clinic, health care place, or hotline number/did something to prevent the problem	6%	5%	14%	9%	6%	4%	17%	2%

References

- Beck, V. and Pollard, W.E. (2001). How do *regular viewers* of prime time TV dramas respond to health information in the shows? Paper presented at the American Public Health Association 129th Annual Meeting and Exposition, Atlanta, Georgia.

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