

## Evidence assessment: Summary of a systematic review

### Who is this summary for?

This summary is for policy makers and other stakeholders who have to make decisions about using mass media to improve the use of health services

### *Mass media interventions: effects on health services utilisation*

#### Key findings

Mass media campaigns may influence the use of health services. They can encourage people to use effective interventions and discourage them from using ineffective ones.

#### Background

Mass media is an important way of providing information to the general public and is the leading source of information for health related issues. The World Health Organisation (WHO) recognises media advocacy as an established health promotion strategy. It is important to evaluate the effects of mass media on the use of health services.

**Mass media for health in Cameroon:** Mass media plays a major role in social marketing health campaigns in Cameroon, and is used to encourage the use of insecticide treated bed nets, condoms, oral rehydration salts and oral contraception. Radio and TV messages are also used to encourage the general public to screen for non-communicable diseases like breast cancer, high blood pressure and diabetes.

#### Question

Does mass media compared to any other intervention influence the utilization of health services by professionals, patients, or the public?

<b>About the systematic review</b>		
	<b>What the review authors searched for</b>	<b>What the review authors found</b>
<b>Studies</b>	Randomised controlled trials (RCTs), controlled clinical trials (CCTs), controlled before-and-after studies (CBAs) and interrupted time series analyses (ITSS)	20 interrupted time series
<b>Participants</b>	Health care providers, patients, and the general public	General public, health professionals
<b>Interventions</b>	The authors considered interventions that: a) were based upon the use of mass media, including radio, television, newspapers, magazines, leaflets, posters and pamphlets (alone or in conjunction with other interventions); b) were targeted at the population level; and c) which aimed to promote or discourage the use of health care interventions/procedures, or to change public lifestyles. Studies must report the subsequent changes in health services utilization due to the intervention	Most of the mass media campaigns described in the included studies were planned interventions which aimed to promote the use of specific health services. All the campaigns relied on the use of a variety of media, including radio, television, newspapers, posters and leaflets. Electronic media, such as the Internet, were not used in any of the studies. In many circumstances, the campaign was integrated with initiatives specifically targeted at health professionals (usually the distribution of printed educational materials and/or by the organisation of seminars and workshops). The length of the campaigns varied widely across the studies, ranging from one week to four years.
<b>Controls</b>	Any controls	No studies reported a control
<b>Outcomes</b>	The authors sought objective (i.e. not self-reported) measures of the direct impact of the interventions on health services utilization. In the context of this review, health services utilization was defined broadly to include initiatives concerning the use of drugs, medical or surgical procedures, and diagnostic tests. Studies that only reported the impact of mass media on health care professionals', patients' and the public's attitudes, awareness, knowledge, or opinions were excluded	Most studies based the assessment of the impact of the campaign on some measure of health care utilisation. Others relied on patient-reported outcome measures relating to the use of the intervention promoted (or discouraged) by the campaign.
<b>Date of the most recent search:</b> 16 November 2001		
<b>Limitations:</b> This is a good quality systematic review. Minor limitations related to the quality of the primary research articles that were included and the inability to pool the retrieved data statistically.		
<b>Review citation:</b> Grilli R, Ramsay C, Minozzi S. Mass media interventions: effects on health services utilisation. Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews 2002, Issue 1. Art. No.: CD000389. DOI: 10.1002/14651858.CD000389.		

## Summary of Findings table

The findings in this review were reported in a narrative manner

## Applicability

Five of these studies were conducted in the UK, four in the US, four in Australia and one each in Sweden, France, Argentina, Switzerland, Canada, Finland and Austria. Owing to the fact that mass media is the preferred means of communication in many low-resources countries, these findings may be applicable in Cameroon.

## Conclusions

This review supports the view that mass media campaigns may have a positive influence upon the manner in which health services are utilized. Yet, questions relating to contextual factors, its effect on rate of utilization, its cost effectiveness and newer forms of mass media (e.g. internet) remain unanswered.

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