

The importance of communication in behavioural risk factor surveillance systems: the Italian experience 2006-2007



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Background

- Communication plays an important role in the establishment of new surveillance systems
- Establishing consensus is essential, not only scientifically but also politically and socially
- Strong emphasis in the new Italian behavioural risk factor surveillance system (PASSI) on the development of a communication plan that is closely integrated with the planning, implementation, and monitoring activities of the system

Objectives of the communication plan

- Identify local stakeholders, promote dialogue and integrate the involved institutional and social figures
- Share goals and establish consensus
- Define of roles, functions and duties
- Exchange information about activities and initiatives in progress
- Share of results, updates and changes
- Create a network of all professional figures involved in the system

Underlying principles

- Participatory approach based on clarity and transparency of:
 - principles
 - objectives
 - process
 - relations
- Emphasis on the value of interactive exchange, listening, dialogue, and integration between all partners in the surveillance system, with the goal of establishing credibility and confidence in the system

Communication activities and projects

- Preparation of training and promotional materials for different audiences (letters, brochures, posters, slides)
- Publication of a short booklet for policy makers on key political and strategic topics
- Creation of a public website for promotion of the study that received >12 000 visits between January and June 2007
- Periodic meetings of coordinators
- Password-protected forum for open exchange between project participants
- Publication of a monthly bulletin ("PASSI-one")
- Planning of an eventual interactive database providing tables and maps at local and regional level

Cover of booklet for policy makers



Anniversary edition of PASSI-one bulletin



Conclusions

- In the early stages of PASSI, communication activities have helped promote the project among political and health authorities at local, regional and national level
- As PASSI evolves and data become available from the system, new products will be developed and integrated with existing ones to ensure maximum use of PASSI findings for public health purposes