

The Importance of Communication in Behavioural Risk Factor Surveillance Systems: the Italian Experience PASSI 2006-2010

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Background

- Communication plays a crucial role in a surveillance system, scientifically but also politically and socially
- Strong emphasis has been given to the **communication plan and activities** in the Italian behavioural risk factor surveillance system named PASSI
- The communication strategy has been thought integrated with the planning, implementation and monitoring activities of the entire system.

Objectives

- Elaborating a communication strategy (objectives, audiences, media, timelines; criteria for monitoring and evaluating) at three different levels (national, regional, local)
- Identifying stakeholders, promoting dialogue and integration among involved institutional and social figures
- Goal sharing and establishment of consensus, facilitating collaboration and participation
- Definition of roles, functions, duties
- Exchange of information about ongoing activities and initiatives
- Sharing of results, updates, changes
- Creating a professional network (internal communication)
- Designing communication of results and production of materials.

Methods

- It is used a communicative type that harks back to a **"participatory approach"**, that is based onto "clarity and full-transparency principles".
- It implies interactive exchange, listening, dialogue and integration among all social and institutional partners, in a **trust and credibility** process-building.
- Participation and listening are the basic elements also for phone communication which is used for interviews PASSI.

Results

- Communication plan at national, regional, local levels
- **Training and promotional materials** for different audiences (letters, brochures, posters, presentations, press kit) for a shared management nationwide
- **Bulletin**, "PASSI-one". 17 numbers have been published from Dec 2006 to Jul 2010
- Scientific **reports**
- Synthetic **booklets** for policy makers, stakeholders
- Periodic meetings and interactive **workshops**
- Password-protected **portal** with interactive databases providing tables and maps at three levels and also a **forum** for open debate among participants
- Public **website** (www.epicentro.iss.it/passi) for promoting results. Over 100.000 visits from Jan 2007 to Nov 2010; it is a trend in continue growth.

Passi Home Page in English:

<http://www.epicentro.iss.it/passi/english.asp>

Progressi delle Aziende Sanitarie per la Salute in Italia (Passi)
The Italian behavioral risk factor surveillance system

Non-communicable chronic diseases cause the major part of the disease burden and have great economic impact, especially in countries with advanced economies. Behavioural risk factors play an important role in their development.

To plan, implement and evaluate preventive interventions on chronic diseases, timely information are needed not only on health status and behaviours of the population, but also on their knowledge and perceptions about healthy habits and lifestyle.

The Italian Ministry of Health in 2007 approved the program "Guadagnare salute - rendere facile le scelte salutari", that envisages strategic actions to contrast the most important behavioral risk factors, in the context of the European strategy to tackle chronic diseases (Gaming Health). In 2006, the Italian Ministry of Health funded the National Health Institute (ISS) to develop ongoing surveillance in adults of major behavioural risk factors and of preventive measures included in the National Prevention Plan (in English). The project was named **Passi (Progressi delle Aziende Sanitarie per la Salute in Italia - Progress by local health units towards a healthier Italy)**.

Since in Italy most public health interventions are planned and verified at local level, in PASSI Regions and local health units are directly involved in the surveillance, with the supervision of a national coordinating group, that comprises experts of the ISS and of the Regions. The system started in 2007 to provide surveillance of the health status of Italian population, through the systematic and continuous collection of data about the lifestyles of adults (18-69 years) and the implementation of preventive interventions that Regions and local health units are activating.

Resources

- What is the Passi surveillance system?
- Organization
- Methods
- Policy and strategic framework
- View the results (2007-2008) (in Italian)
- Download the Passi 2007 National report summary (participating local health units pool - in Italian, pdf 1.75 Mb). The document was presented on 3 December 2008 (in Italian) in the auditorium of the Ministry of Health.

Discussion

- Communication activities helped delivering data PASSI with political and public health authorities at different levels in the early stages of its establishment
- Newly generated communication tools have been elaborating and integrating with the first ones, within the lifecycle of the surveillance system. They all must be improved further to produce an increasing knowledge about all topics.

Conclusions

- Performed activities improved awareness and use of data PASSI since tools are suitable to the different selected targets
- To better communicate health risks and information, the opinions and comments of the recipients of informative materials should be used by communications professionals
- It is also necessary to increase the rate of exposition to communication among stakeholders.

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