

NW1: DeNDRoN North West INTERACT Project Communications Strategy 2012

Background & context

A 2011 report, INTERACT, which looked into local NHS dementia services highlighted a lack of awareness about dementia research, both amongst the general public and amongst NHS staff. This included where research is taking place, how it is conducted and organised, what opportunities there are for staff and patients, why dementia research is important and how people go about getting involved in research. The report also looked at the LRNs' work to engage directly with patients via support groups, charities and through PPI and how this might be built on and expanded.

The objective of the communications project is to directly improve awareness of DeNDRoN amongst the population of Cheshire and Merseyside and to also raise awareness of local research structures amongst NHS staff to enable them to refer patients to a local DeNDRoN research register. It will also directly increase awareness of local research opportunities directly with patients, carers and the general public to encourage self-referral onto a local research register.

This will be achieved through the development and implementation of a direct communications and marketing plan in the Cheshire and Merseyside CLRN region. This region was selected due to the following factors:

- The size of the North West; it would not be feasible to cover the whole region given the timescale
- CLRN (C&M CLRN)
- Location of the PPI Coordinator (based at Merseycare, near Liverpool)
- Existing links with voluntary groups in the area

It was expected that research in the C&M region would be taking place at the time of the project, but by the time it was initiated there were no studies available to refer people to. This was something beyond DeNDRoN's control.

Communication Objectives

- Increase awareness of local research and build a strong brand identity of DeNDRoN NW
- Increase of awareness of DeNDRoN NW

- Increase of DeNDRoN awareness in Cheshire and Merseyside CLRN area
- Creation of protocol for getting patients onto a local research register
- Increase of self-referrals from members of the public
- Increase number of contact details on the PPI database, started in 2008 from within the Cheshire and Merseyside CLRN footprint

Target audience

The target audience is broad as it covers the whole of the Cheshire and Merseyside CLRN footprint and everyone within it. We will be aiming to communicate with the general public, Trusts, Comprehensive Research Networks, universities, key stakeholders and the voluntary sector.

Stakeholders

The stakeholders for the project are varied and include: patients, carers, the City Council, universities, NHS staff, Trusts and the voluntary sector – all based in the C&M CLRN area.

Stakeholders are a key audience if awareness and the profile of research and DeNDRoN are to be raised across the region. Stakeholders will have varied interests, priorities and objectives so it is vital that any communications activity takes this into account.

For example, a patient or carer's interest would be that of hoping to improve dementia care and awareness. Patients and carers can have a vast number of contacts in both a clinical/caring setting as well as with the general public (friend and family). Their influence could be the passing on of information via word of mouth etc, which is still considered as one of the most powerful ways of spreading information.

NHS staff (including trust and PCT staff) may be interested due to the Government pushing dementia research and The Ministerial Advisory Group on Dementia Research publishing the Headline Report which specifically refers to DeNDRoN and improvement in dementia research.

Key Messages

- We are interested discovering more about dementia – are you?
- Research into dementia will improve care for people today and find a cure for tomorrow
- DeNDRoN can help find a study that's right for you

- DeNDRoN is funded by the National Institute of Health Research, as part of the Clinical Research Network. DeNDRoN is a UK-wide initiative that aims to improve the speed, quality and integration of research in dementias and neurodegenerative diseases to help provide better patient care
- Our projects are vital to research in dementias and neurodegenerative diseases, conditions which will become more common in an aging population

Approach

Method	Effectiveness	Feasibility	Outcome
<p>Media relations campaign aimed at the public:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Case study placement - Partnership with Liverpool Echo - Launch of exclusive statistic as a news 'hook' for campaign – targeted at broadcast, print and online 	<p>Would help to raise public awareness of dementia research, DeNDRoN and would further raise the profile of research in general</p> <p>Would spread the message to a wide audience</p>	<p>Project team do not have media relations experience</p> <p>Short time frame</p> <p>No budget to use a PR agency/freelancer</p>	<p>Unable to deliver this at the time of the project.</p>
<p>Advertising campaign aimed at GP surgeries and Trusts, supported by an invite-only launch event and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Poster campaign - Leaflets about research - Briefing sessions - Roundtable discussions - Attendance at key NHS events 	<p>Would help to raise the profile of DeNDRoN amongst key stakeholders</p> <p>Would ensure that these stakeholders are more receptive to any campaigns that DeNDRoN wishes to involve them in</p> <p>Would help to encourage GPs/Trusts to speak about research opportunities with their patients</p>	<p>Limited budget for design and printing of posters and leaflets</p> <p>No resource to conduct briefings</p> <p>Time limited – hard to get all relevant people together at one time for a launch event</p>	<p>Possible to use some aspects i.e. adopt a design already in use for a leaflet, if sent out to targeted audience, alongside email and telephone contact</p>

Method	Effectiveness	Feasibility	Outcome
Advertising campaign targeted at the public: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bus adverts - Print and online adverts in local media - Radio - Poster campaign in surgeries, supermarkets, museums, galleries, nursing homes 	This, coupled with media relations, would help to get the message across to the public. Would further raise the profile of DeNDRoN and research.	No budget; for effectiveness at least 50 buses would have to carry adverts which would come at a huge cost Print/online advertising too expensive Not all outlets keen to display materials Radio expensive and needs to be run over a long period of time.	Would be scope for a limited number of flyers to be circulated in some public spaces

Conclusion

Due to budget restrictions and time limitations, it was decided that the marketing campaign would take the form of an A5 awareness-raising leaflet. PSS, a charity based in Liverpool, had a design that DeNDRoN could adopt with its own relevant key messages and contact details. The design was reviewed by social workers, carers and children. 1,000 individually numbered leaflets would be distributed to existing and new contacts within the C&M CLRN region. New contacts were asked first via email and phone whether they would display the leaflet.

Approach – step by step

- Create a database of stakeholders – so that comparisons can be made with existing benchmark and new contacts made
- Design and publish an awareness-raising leaflet
- Attend events (e.g. QUIPP, PPI) to discuss research and to distribute the leaflet
- Contact and then distribute to stakeholders willing to be involved
- Create systems for a self-referral process
- Create protocol for when patients contact DeNDRoN
- Accurately record all new contacts made.

Targeted approaches for each audience are detailed below

Audiences	What do we want them to do?	How will we do it?
Patients, Family & Carers	Recognise DeNDRoN as key in the research of dementias – prevention, diagnosis and treatment. Increase self-referrals to research projects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a marketing campaign that targets members of the public. This will take the form of an A5 leaflet, with key facts and information about research plus how members of the public can go about getting involved. The leaflets will be numbered, so that people who ring to find out more can quote the reference and therefore allow DeNDRoN to track where the leaflet was picked up • Compile a database of all those who contact DeNDRoN as a result of the leaflet. The database will mean that a ready-made contacts list is ready for when suitable studies are available • Create a protocol for when patients interested in registering contact DeNDRoN, and make sure staff are fully briefed. For example, create a phone script relevant to a member of the public and have the appropriate questions set out, so that the correct data is captured • Creation of a designated email address for those interested to contact • Use of public-facing social media channels, such as dementia-related forums, Twitter, Facebook
Voluntary Sector/Universities/Council (i.e. museums, community centres)	Recognise DeNDRoN as key in dementia research and therefore support the network in reaching out to various audiences and share information as appropriate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reach out to groups that DeNDRoN has, historically, a good relationship with and notify them of the project • Explain the objectives and the success measures of the project and share the leaflet with them, in order to get their buy-in • Invite their members to comment on the project, to ensure best practice is adhered to • Target their websites, social media outlets, online outlets and newsletters to carry the postcard • Ask, via email, if they are willing to display the A5 leaflet in relevant areas
Trusts/PCTs/GP surgeries	Develop an interest in DeNDRoN and its importance in research.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target Trusts directly, initially via a ‘first contact’ email to notify them that the project is taking place. Trusts that have previously had no experience of

	Support the communications projects by displaying the postcard. Encourage these outlets to actively promote research. Tell patients about research as part of patient care pathway.	DeNDRoN should also be targeted in order to build on contacts database. Contacts can then be followed up by telephone <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage them to display the postcard in relevant areas • Maintain contact, i.e. through newsletters, relevant information, to maintain momentum of interest.
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Risks/challenges

- Self referrals are not common – we need to show that we can increase this
- No budget for publishing promotional material – leaflet alone may not have desired impact
- No budget for marketing or PR
- Historical issues with some voluntary groups
- Currently no suitable studies to refer patients to.

Key dates

15/03/2012 - Steering Group Meeting with PPI Lay Members

27/03/2012 - Dementia QUIPP Feedback Event

31/04/2012 – Deadline for draft comms plan

31/04/2012 – Deadline for postcard distribution

31/10/2012 – deadline for evaluation survey and final report

Budget

There is no budget for the project.

Evaluation

- The number of additional contacts we can add to the baseline database
- The number of calls/emails of interest we receive – we can also measure where the most successful areas of distribution will be by taking reference number of leaflet.