

ATTACHMENT 1: Explanation of Types of Research

Formative Research and Pre-testing

To ensure that health messages have the potential to be received, understood, and accepted by those for whom they are intended, Office of Communications and Education (OCE) employs formative research and pretesting. Specifically, these types of research involve: 1) assessing audience knowledge, attitudes, behaviors and other characteristics for the planning/development of health messages, education products, communication strategies, and public information programs; and 2) pretesting these health messages, products, strategies, and program components while they are in developmental form to assess audience comprehension, reactions, and perceptions. The information obtained from audience research and pretesting can lead to improvements in materials and strategies while revisions are still affordable and possible. By maximizing the effectiveness of these messages and strategies for reaching targeted audiences, the frequency with which publications, products, and programs need to be modified is reduced.

Because OCE is NCI's chief resource for cancer communication and education, it has the responsibility to both the Institute and its many constituencies to provide credible cancer information messages and services. The complexity of these messages will only continue to increase as scientific progress in cancer continues its exponential growth. Unless NCI is able to empirically show that its messages and materials have the potential to be understood and useful to their target audiences, it will be unable to carry out its mandate effectively.

Formative research and pretesting are activities that OCE and other communication offices perform on almost all of NCI's print pieces, broadcast products, and informational services and messages in order to maximize their usefulness. The studies are conducted on a small scale and focus on potential effectiveness with specific target audiences.

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Customer Satisfaction

The OCE is also responsible for ensuring the relevance, utility, and appropriateness of the many educational programs and products that the Office produces through implementation of customer satisfaction research. By obtaining information from intended audiences on the extent to which materials satisfy their needs, OCE will be able to systematically establish and follow a feedback loop that provides immediately useful information to revise and enhance educational programs and products so that they attain maximum relevance, utility, appropriateness, and impact.

Attachment 2 contains a listing of different research methodologies for formative research, pretesting, and customer satisfaction used during the clearance period starting in 2010 and ending in 2012.