

SECTION 4

**SUSTAINABLE PUBLIC
AWARENESS OF
PREVENTION AND
EARLY DETECTION OF**

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❖ *A novel and sustainable approach to educate the public on cancer awareness in Dominica: A unique ROSS initiative* 5

INTRODUCTION

THE IMPACT OF PUBLIC EDUCATION FOR PREVENTION AND EARLY DETECTION IS BEYOND ANY DOUBT OR DISPUTE. RECENT REMARKABLE IMPROVEMENT IN SURVIVAL OF SEVERAL COMMON CANCERS IN NORTH AMERICA IS UNDOUBTEDLY DUE TO PUBLIC EDUCATION.

TECHNIQUES

Appreciating:

Value of screening is educational level dependent.

Lack of appreciation leads to lack of participation.

Lack of participation increased incidence of cancer at late stage – higher mortality.

For cancer prevention and early detection, numerous methods have been used frequently in a repetitive manner. Examples are:

1. Public and community lectures and speaking activities
2. Health fairs
3. Targeted educational documentaries
4. Media (Ads – NGO spokesman)
5. Public display billboards
6. Advertisements
7. Sponsors for all above activities

In North America, success in cancer prevention for early detection programs exposed some most disturbing facts. That race/ethnicity, level of education and income level are intertwined with high rates of cancer and other illnesses. Poverty restricts mobility which restricts exposure to information leading to various types of social ills including cancer. Thus poor countries are at a disadvantage. Even being simply educated on how to be aware and detect cancer early can lead to longer life.

INNOVATIVE APPROACH

On the premises of lack of education, poverty and restricted mobility of a large section of population in developing and resource limited countries; TEAM-ONCOLOGY-DOMINICA, ONCOLOGY SOCIETY OF THE ROSS UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF MEDICINE initiated an innovative project.

It was felt all these approaches are essentially "*one time approach*", whose impact on community fades away with time. Even repeated approaches rarely develop a cohesive force between the educators and the communities. It is very true in this case "*out of sight, out of mind*".

Repeated media blitz of sky high ad-hoarding, lacking human touch "out of depth, out of touch", the cordiality is missing.

Developing countries "various awareness programs" are repeated and hammered again and again both human and inhumanly. The man-power price tag is beyond the reach of poverty stricken countries where "education programs" are needed most and at a strong deep empathetic human level. This goal is essentially unachievable due to poverty, lack of education and resources.

However, our innovative approach has addressed these issues to create an education program which is almost free from any cost and sustainable in the communities. These programs are delivered in two phases.

PHASE I

Trained and selected members of Ross University Oncology Society, developed a group of 5 – 6 students. Each student is allocated 12 minutes to speak on a particular aspect of "Cancer Awareness and Early Detection.

In every academic semester, Ross team went to present their chosen topic to school leaver.

CHOICE OF EDUCATIONAL TARGET: All 9 secondary schools in Dominica was chosen for delivery of topic titled, "Cancer Me and My Society". 5th Form students were chosen for education because:

- They will be leaving school as respected educated high school graduates, ready for higher education and ready for the work force.
- They will, aside from being informed, be educated and in turn be embedded in their own community as a resource for information.

The following topics were presented in 15 minutes to the 5th Form students.

1. What is cancer? Malignant and Non-malignant Tumors.
2. 10 signs of cancer. Common cancers.
3. Lifestyle: Smoking, Diet, Inactivity.
4. Treatments: Options – Availability in Dominica.
5. Community and Palliative Care.

A survey questionnaire was developed for impact analysis distributed both before and after the presentation.

The impact analysis and ongoing processing of data of early analysis is available showing a strong impact.

PHASE II

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY EDUCATION

In Phase II of this program, immediately after the presentation to 5th Form students, we selected 4 – 5 volunteers from one or two communities. They were invited to Ross University premises in Portsmouth Dominica.

Members of the Oncology Society trained the groups to deliver the same educational materials to the groups in their community. We provided the moral support and logistics as needed but the students in cooperation with the village/church councils, selected a place and time for their presentation in the community; usually a school/church hall.

Refer to abstract: "A Novel and Sustainable Approach to Educate the Public on Cancer Awareness in Dominica: A Unique Ross Initiative."

This was the first attempt to develop a sustainable "Cancer Awareness and Early Detection and Prevention" Program.

So far we managed to visit 5 communities. Even at community level, the reception from the members are excellent. Each attendant is given a "pre" and "post" seminar questionnaire for impact analysis. Data presented in abstract, presents an impact analysis which is positive and encouraging especially for Dominica for taking a leadership role in this plan.