

Editorial

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This issue of the *Journal of Health Communication: International Perspectives* provides a timely scholarly appraisal of the latest activities in cancer communication, with data from the first Health Information National Trends Survey (HINTS) conducted in 2003.

The HINTS survey provides a unique opportunity to explore the characteristics of information seekers and nonseekers and the content of information being sought by the public in a nationally representative sample. This effort as part of the cancer communication efforts from the U.S. National Cancer Institute provides an understanding that can help inform decision making with generalizable and policy-relevant information about the American public's information needs.

The guest editors, Bradford W. Hesse, Gary Kreps, Richard P. Moser, and Lila J. Finney Rutten, are among the leaders in the field. This peer-reviewed supplement to the journal (sponsored by the U.S. National Cancer Institute) offers initial analysis based upon the HINTS data, and each article highlights specific ideas to address cancer.

Since the first declaration of the “war on cancer” in the 1970s, the National Cancer Institute's Cancer Information Service began in 1975 to provide a national information and education network that serves the nation by providing the latest scientific cancer information to the American public. In the twenty-first century, with the increased reach and richness of data via the Internet and the concomitant and increased evidence-based preventive and treatment options for cancer, opportunities for communication interventions continue to be an important part of the arsenal to combat cancer.

At the beginning of this century more than 7 million deaths are attributable to cancer worldwide. Clearly, this is not a challenge that can be addressed by government or any single sector. Data from more than 6,000 Americans identifies many disparities, as well as approaches, for public health and other interventions for better cancer control and prevention.

We would all agree that the application of existing knowledge has the potential to make an even greater contribution to the prevention and control of cancer epidemics. Challenges of the implementation of effective policies, however, need to be more widely recognized and overcome.

This issue of the journal and the underlying evidence should assist all of us as stakeholders in multiple sectors—whether in cancer specifically or health in general—to continue to approach activities with a firm evidence base with theoretical and

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ethical underpinnings to advance public health. Clearly, ideal communication that leads to informed citizens who participate in decisions affecting their quality of life and health is the challenge that those in the field of health communication confront. My hope is that readers of this journal can apply such ideas to make a difference for those individuals and their families who already have or will be affected by cancer.