

Pharmaceutical Executive

Gatekeepers Women represent a powerful, yet untapped marketing audience.

Women influence many family decisions—from choosing what's for dinner to selecting the medications their children take. In fact, nearly two-thirds of women are responsible for family healthcare decisions, according to a 2004 national survey conducted by Plan for Your Health. Many women also assume the care-giving role outside their nuclear families. Today's middle-aged woman may also look after her parents and in-laws too, often determining how long they can live on their own and how to best care for them. In addition, she often influences the important health decisions of grandchildren, co-workers, and friends.

New Health Information

Having seen traditional wisdom overturned by new scientific findings, baby-boomer women embrace new wisdom. As new knowledge becomes available, they act on it and, more importantly, they tell others. They also actively seek health information. Of the estimated 93 million Americans who key in health-related searches on the Web, women are more likely than men to look for health information online (85 percent vs. 75 percent), according to the 2003 Pew Internet & American Life Project.

Pharma marketers should seize the opportunity to reach out to this information-seeking, receptive audience. But they must use targeted communications to reach them. Women tend to value a marketing approach that feels intimate and community-oriented. Therefore, education initiatives geared to women should do more than provide valuable information—they should offer an experience, a venue for women to interact, to inspire

and empower one another.

By supporting independent consumer health-education initiatives, pharma can help women learn more about health and healthcare. To do so, marketers should leverage not only the Internet, but also in-

person presentations and print media.

In-Person

African-American women tend to experience a high incidence of diabetes and heart disease. In fact, one in four African-American women over the age of 55 has diabetes and more than 40 percent of the deaths in this population stem from heart disease, according to the American Heart Association. But many African-American women are not aware of this predisposition. To better inform them, LLuminari, a network of health experts, in partnership with the Council of Women Leaders, launched a community health-education initiative to



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African-American women at this "We Matter" event learn about health risks and disease prevention, as well as community health issues. About 40 percent of women who attend these events sign up to receive toolkits containing health-education materials, which they are encouraged to share with others in their communities.

help African-American women stimulate change in the health of their communities.

Since October 2004, the "We Matter" program has been implemented in seven major metropolitan cities with the support of corporate underwriters and faith-based organizations. Using the principle of "Each One Teach One," this program brings women together to learn about health risks and disease prevention as well as community health issues.

At the core of the program's success are nationally known physicians and other health experts who make personal appearances before live audiences. Experts, such as Byllye Avery, founder of the National Black Women's Health Imperative, speak from their own experiences and inspire women to put their health first. The meeting coordinators test each woman's health knowledge at the beginning and the end of each program using an audience response system. This metric has consistently shown that attending the program leads to a 38-percent increase in health knowledge.

In addition, participants are certified as "health champions," with the goal of returning to their respective communities to share information. About 40 percent of them sign up to receive a toolkit containing health-education materials suitable for

Women's magazines represent an effective medium to market to women. *O, The Oprah Magazine* published a "Here's to Your Health" editorial series, which ran every month in 2003. The series educated women on topics ranging from nutrition to emotional health. *Health* magazine stages live events to bring women together.



Web's potential to change the way people think about their health has barely been tapped. To date, most sites only make existing information more accessible, and not necessarily more meaningful. Few have realized the power that comes from a vibrant, engaged online community.

When it debuted two years ago, EmbracingWomensHealth.com began attracting women with a fresh take on health issues. It provides a free exchange of information, expert knowledge, and a grassroots movement that has grown as more women sign on to learn about their health and communicate with other like-minded women. More than 10,000 women have joined this online community, which links visitors to health experts

and become advocates in their own communities. Every month a new champion's story and photograph are featured on the site's home page.

Print

Women's magazines that address health also represent a great vehicle to reach women. For example, *O, The Oprah Magazine*, published the editorial series "Here's to Your Health." The magazine turned to a network of evidence-based health experts and engaged them in developing the series, which featured health experts' guidance on reaching a healthier place through baby steps — from nutrition to heart health to emotional health. The series generated thousands of e-mails from women asking questions and seeking additional guidance. In addition, other major magazines and newspapers routinely feature health and wellness content in response to their readers' interest. *Health* magazine, for example, has expanded its reach by offering live events to bring communities of women together. In March, it will hold a half-day conference to honor "Me Time," a day that encourages women to put themselves first.

Marketing to women makes sense for many reasons. Not only do women make health decisions for others, but they also actively seek new health information for themselves. By supporting independent health-education initiatives, pharmaceutical marketers can create a more educated consumer who is better prepared to assume healthcare responsibilities for themselves and others. ☐

Educational initiatives geared toward women should allow them to interact, so they inspire and empower one another.

holding similar programs in their churches or community organizations.

Online

No medium has changed how people communicate as profoundly as the Web. Women enjoy participating in an interactive forum from the comfort of their homes. Even though they communicate with women across the world, they feel immensely connected to them. But the

in different fields, including fitness and nutrition, infertility/fertility, breast health, menopause, and cancer. This interactive site engages women through chat rooms, message boards, blogs, and webcasts related to specific health topics.

Rather than provide comprehensive information on every topic of interest, the experts give women only the most relevant information. The site also encourages women to sign up as health champi-

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