

Campaigns and prevention incentives



A good run for the most important 2 m² in life: the Healthy Skin Campaign, official health partner of the three largest German city marathons

Prevention campaign: the most important 2 m²

“Healthy skin – fewer cases of skin disease.” This was the objective which the statutory health and accident insurance institutions had set themselves in their Healthy Skin Campaign. For two years, from the beginning of 2007 to the end of 2008, the campaign focused upon the largest organ in the human body: the skin. The reason: the skin of an adult human being, typically approximately two square metres in area, is subject to high stresses on a daily basis. Continual contact with moisture, contact with chemicals, mechanical stress and UV radiation all have an adverse effect upon the skin. The result: skin diseases, which beside personal discomfort and pain often also lead to

ostracization: a person’s skin is, after all, their “calling-card”. In addition, skin diseases result in the statutory health and accident insurance institutions incurring high costs.

Skin diseases affect people of all ages and in all areas of life. Under the motto: “Your skin. The most important 2 m² in your life”, the German statutory health and accident insurance institutions therefore set themselves the goal of reaching the greatest possible number of people and of motivating them to give greater consideration to how they treat their skin. At the same time, the Healthy Skin Campaign was the first prevention campaign involving institutions

from different branches of the German social insurance system. Well over 100 institutions, including all the institutions for statutory accident insurance and prevention (BGs) and public-sector accident insurance institutions, the agricultural social insurers, numerous company health insurance funds and AOK health insurance institutions, and a great many other partners such as the German regional governments and dermatological associations, pursued the objectives of the prevention campaign through joint and individual activities.

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The adverse effects of wet work

The adverse effects of wet work upon the skin was a key topic of the “Healthy Skin Campaign”. Parallel to the campaign, the BGFA launched a project which addresses the subject from an occupational medical perspective. The focus lies upon employees who are regularly exposed to moisture at the workplace. These employees face a significantly higher risk of suffering skin disease, such as irritative contact eczema, of the hands. Wet work includes both work performed in a wet environment, and the wearing of impermeable protective gloves; both may damage the skin. Where gloves are worn, damage is caused by occlusion, i.e. the hermetic sealing of the skin from the outside air. The BGFA is conducting experiments into how the different forms and duration of exposure to moisture affect the skin’s epidermal barrier.

For employees in Germany who are regularly exposed to moisture for over two hours, occupational medical health checks are recommended. Where the task lasts for over four hours, these checks are mandatory. Up to now, recommendations have been made based primarily upon the evaluation of questionnaire surveys and relevant reports and assessments produced during investigations into suspected cases with occupational disease.

More recent studies have shown that data based upon patients’ own assessments frequently lead to wet work being over- or underestimated. At present, however, no clinical studies of skin physiology exist which are able to provide information on the onset and progress of damage to the epidermal barrier. In a pilot study at the BGFA, an experimental approach is to examine the duration and form of exposure to moisture which actually lead to reproducible changes in the skin’s barrier. The project will also address the question of whether groups exist which are at particular risk of certain forms of injury. A third approach will examine the extent to which additive effects currently under

discussion are caused by the combined effect of “work in wet environments” and “occlusion”, which likewise have not yet been scientifically verified or reproduced. The results are to serve as a standardized basis for further studies into the nature

and duration of different occupations involving exposure to moisture, and for the resulting prevention studies.

Further information:
www.bgfa.de (Webcode 510976)

Impermeable protective gloves must also be worn during surgery



The activities were based upon a common detailed concept document. Besides a media-oriented umbrella campaign, the focus lay above all on dialogue-oriented campaigns conducted by social insurance institutions individually or in collaboration with other institutions for the insured individuals. The preventive activity proper was conducted in these individual campaigns. In events, seminars and projects and with media geared to the users, the institutions addressed their target audiences on their own ground: in nurseries, schools, companies, and public institutions.

For example, the BGs responsible for the industrial sector and seven public-sector accident insurance institutions took advantage of the world's largest trade fair for occupational safety and health in order to draw attention to the most important 2 m²: at the A+A in September 2007, skin protection was the key topic of the BG Boulevard, the fair stand of the statutory accident insurance institutions. Over 55,000 visitors from the sector were provided with insights into topics associated with safety and health at work.

A further positive example from the campaigns run by the institutions: for two days, the Delmeburg, a landmark of the town of Delmenhorst near Bremen, was synonymous with the topic of skin. Eight partner bodies had joined forces in order to offer their concerted expertise on the subject of skin and skin protection: the BGW (the BG responsible for the health and welfare services), the AOK health insurance fund, the GUV Oldenburg (the municipal accident insurance association of the district), the University of Osnabrück, the Delmenhorst academy of further education, the Delmenhorst public health department, and the two local clinics. These bodies offered visitors a wide programme of events: the BGW and the GUV Oldenburg provided public information on the hazards associated with wet work, whilst the AOK offered personal cosmetic and skin-type advice. A further focus lay upon talks by experts, for example under the heading "Hygiene for the hands: a blessing or a curse for skin pro-

tection?", or "Sunscreen: does the sun poison our skin?".

An objective of the umbrella campaign was that of attaining a sustained media presence for the subject of skin. This was to be achieved by continual public-relations work. Press, TV and radio received regular reports on the most interesting aspects of the most important 2 m². By the end of the Healthy Skin Campaign, the participating institutions had counted over 3,000 references in the press, online media, and TV and radio – a result to be proud of.

The highlight of the umbrella campaign were the health partnerships with the three largest German marathons: in Hamburg and Cologne in 2007, and in Berlin in 2008. Two particular reasons existed for the partnerships. Firstly, skin diseases are a significant problem for many runners. Regular outdoor training places stress upon their skin, for example owing to UV radiation or to clothing which rubs against the skin, leading to blisters and inflammation. At the same time, the marathons served as a platform by which the institutions supporting the Healthy Skin Campaign were able to reach a total of over two and a half million people along the route with their message – an ideal cross-section of the entire population.

Evaluation of the Healthy Skin Campaign

The Healthy Skin Campaign took a number of forms. Which activities were most effective could be determined only by a systematic evaluation revealing the strengths and weaknesses of the various measures and activities.

The "Evaluation of prevention measures" department at the BGAG Institute Work and Health of the German Social Accident Insurance organized and carried out this process on behalf of the Healthy Skin Campaign. The evaluation was based on four aspects: analysis of the response to media work; pre- and post-campaign surveys in the wider population concerning skin protection; evaluation of the campaigns conducted by individual institutions; and process evaluation.

Analysis of the media response

The response in the press was analysed systematically whilst the campaign was still in progress. This enabled the parties involved to assess the campaign's dissemination via the media, and its communicative success. The results are impressive: by the end of the Healthy Skin Campaign, over 3,000 articles had appeared, from which a total of over 300 million reader contacts can be inferred. A total of over 300 articles on the campaign appeared in the publications of the supporting institutions alone, which have a circulation of over 40 million.

Survey of the population

In order for more information to be obtained on attitudes, knowledge, behaviour and developments in the population, some 2,000 individuals in the wider population were questioned at the beginning of the campaign, and another 2,000 upon its completion.

The results of both pre- and post-campaign surveys showed the population to be already well-informed on the subject of skin. The attitude towards the significance of skin and to skin protection was also very positive in both years. The data recorded in 2006 regarding the behaviour of those questioned did however reveal scope for improvement.

In 2008, changes were noted in attitudes to the subject of protection against the sun. A general difference in attitude, knowledge and behaviour between pre- and post-campaign surveys was not confirmed, however. The umbrella media campaign was too short in its duration and the financial resources too limited for major changes to be brought about among the wider public. However, the results show clearly that individuals with a high degree of awareness for skin-related issues were more receptive for the campaign's messages. This subgroup clearly demonstrated a more positive attitude, was more knowledgeable about the skin, and exhibited more appropriate behaviour with regard to it. It can be assumed that previous experience with the subject of skin had particularly raised awareness among this population group.

Support for the evaluations of the campaigns conducted by the participating institutions

More precise conclusions regarding changes among the selected target groups were obtained via evaluations performed by the participating institutions. Their surveys were related to specific measures. Accordingly, significant changes were identified within the target groups.

The evaluation of the campaigns by the supporting institutions concerned individual measures conducted locally, and their impact upon people. The BGAG advised the accident insurance institutions on their

campaigns and supported them with events and workshops. Experience gathered by the institutions from their evaluations are also to be considered in the context of future prevention campaigns.

Process evaluation

Since a campaign supported by over 100 institutions requires robust structures and joint activity, this interaction was analysed by a process evaluation, the purpose of which was to derive conclusions applicable to future prevention campaigns.

For this purpose, the Academic Data survey institute conducted a survey of all mem-

bers of the project management team by means of a qualitative interview guide. Among other things, all members consulted reported positively that the subject of skin had been established successfully in the public consciousness, a range of partners with different prevention mandates had been integrated, and the corporate design had been established.

Further information:
www.dguv.de (Webcode d69810 and e47043)

The “Fight the Risk” prevention campaign

The success of the “On the right foot” campaign, which in 2003 and 2004 resulted in a 25 % decrease in workplace trip, slip and fall accidents, and the campaign under the banner “Your skin – the most important 2 m² in your life”, prove that campaigns are a successful instrument for prevention. They are an important element within the Common German OSH Strategy, and their use is now taken for granted in the statutory accident insurance institutions and their network of partner bodies.

In order to attain the Common German OSH Strategy’s goal of reducing the frequency and severity of occupational accidents, and the agreed associated mandatory work programme, co-ordinated throughout Germany, of safe driving and transport within plants and on the public highway, the next major prevention campaign is currently in preparation. It will be launched in 2010, and will once again have a duration of two years. The communication and prevention activities of the

statutory accident insurance institutions will then be focused on a common topic, namely the prevention and reduction in severity of:

- Accidents occurring during transport and traffic within plants
- Accidents on public roads during business journeys
- Accidents involving schoolchildren on public roads
- Commuting accidents

I am convinced that campaigns have the effect of spurring on prevention activity, and that joint activity leads to valuable synergistic effects. Campaigns are exciting, living projects, and I find them very enjoyable.

Elke Rogosky, Central Prevention Division of the German Social Accident Insurance (DGUV)

