Popular culture, health improvement and Government policy

The edutainment approach
When I was a public health communication lead it occurred to me that we worked from the unspoken assumption that people either are or should be interested in health. Often of course that is not the case. Instead I suggest using social marketing data to find out what different target groups are interested in and then using this to engage them. This could be for educational, consultation or PR purposes. The popular culture approaches I researched in detail include
- Pop music
- Comedy
- Fashion
- Crosswords
- Romantic novels
- Magazines and comics
- Computer games
- Football

I expand on edutainment (education and entertainment) in more detail at www.sexanddrugsandrockandhealth.com (or www.andhealth.org)

Linking the approach to Government public health policy
This edutainment approach fits well into many of the models and issues presented in the Government's 'Healthy Lives, Healthy People: Our strategy for public health in England' white paper and the accompanying background document 'Our Health and Wellbeing Today':
- *Domain 3 and the intervention ladder:* The approach fits into the White Paper's public health domain 3 around positively promoting healthy lifestyles. In terms of the Nuffield Council on Bioethics intervention ladder that the Government also quotes it is on the second rung concerned with giving information and educating people
- *Tackling health inequalities:* The approach is particularly appropriate for targeting 'hard to reach' groups and those who aren't initially interested in health issues
- *Reaching people at different times in their life course:* At different periods in their lives people have different interest which can be used to engage them. In childhood for example it may be comics, in young adulthood pop music and in older age crosswords. However, social market research is really needed to know what would work with different groups
- *Social marketing:* The approach is a development on traditional social marketing campaigns as it increases the importance on finding out what different target groups are actually interested in as a way of engaging them to change behaviour
- *Social networks:* The approach also fits in well with the idea that people's health behaviour is affected by the social networks they belong to. Such a network is likely to have common interests be it music or computer games. By tapping into these, new ideas can be spread virally by word of mouth and the network used to promote health

- *Using evidence:* The approach is research-based and uses best-practice from other disciplines

Linking the approach to Government social marketing policy
In April 2011 the UK Government published 'Changing Behaviour, Improving Outcomes – A New Social Marketing Strategy for Public Health'. As the edutainment approach in www.sexanddrugsandrockandhealth.com is rooted in social marketing, there is obviously overlap from this perspective. The report does not mention edutainment itself. There are potential links however:

- *47,000 Change4Life local supporters:* The report quotes that this is made up of both professionals and volunteers. Perhaps Change4Life could recruit additional volunteers with music, comedy or other talents to do work around health
- *Kinaesthetic learners:* Many people in key target groups prefer to learn by doing rather than by reading or listening. Edutainment computer games and apps would seem to offer opportunities here. They could also be potentially tied in with other engaging topics such as music or football
- *MINDSPACE:* This is an acronym for a behaviour insight toolkit. 'S' and 'A', particularly tie in with the edutainment approach. 'S' stands for salience and how people's attention is drawn to what seems relevant to them and is novel. 'A' stands for affective and how emotions can shape our behaviour
- *Local action:* The Government are keen that central agencies are only involved in what is most effectively done nationally. They want to allow local agencies to decide how social marketing is used in their own patch. This presumably includes edutainment

Linking the approach to Government public health priorities
The approach in www.sexanddrugsandrockandhealth.com relies on researching what would work with key target groups however here are some possible ideas:

- *Commissioners*
  - Pop music: Commission a musical about emotional health to perform to parents and young people at health fairs, festivals etc. and support it with mental health staff (See November 2010 blog at http://www.inspirationjukebox.com/Blog(1631348).htm)
  - Written word: Produce a romantic novel with healthy eating advice and recipes built into it. Include information about skills around issues such as comfort eating as well as the motivational aspects of eating healthily
  - Crosswords: Produce a free crossword magazine with puzzles in it on all kinds of health topics including smoking and physical activity (See http://www.andhealth.org/page22.htm)
  - Comedy and Fashion: Have 'Ann Summers' type parties and build relationship education into them using comedy (See pages 89-91 at http://www.sexanddrugsandrockandhealth.com/userimages/newPCsection5Comedy.pdf)
  - Comics and football: The lives of footballers or WAGS are always in the news. Comic book stories offer ways of exploring the issues that come out of this e.g. around alcohol (See http://www.sexanddrugsandrockandhealth.com/EdtheBall.pdf)
  - Apps and football: Produce a debate style game on football for an app. This could be about classical football issues such as who is the better

striker as well as drug use in sport etc. (For sample questions to argue for or against see http://www.sexanddrugsandrockandhealth.com/Dissent%20Questions%20Public%20Health.pdf)

- *Foundation Trusts*

Foundation Trusts have an obligation to become mass membership organisations. The need to have members from the community as well as staff offers many opportunities, as long as organisations are clear about what they want. As well as just voting for hospital governors, members could
  - Be consulted and involved on a range of strategic and operational issues
  - Be a focus for hospital PR campaigns, promoting a positive image of the trust and dealing with any negative stories about it. With an increased move to patient choice this becomes even more important
  - Be persuaded to use specific hospital departments more, such as contraceptive services and breast screening, or become blood donors
  - Be helped to become expert patients
  - Be offered help and advice on healthy lifestyle choices
  - Become volunteers in the trust or leave money to it in their wills
  - Become advocates for all of the above, sharing information with family and friends face to face or via email

The popular culture approach can be used both as a way to attract members initially and then to work with them productively. (See http://www.andhealth.org/page29.htm.)

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24/4/2012