

# **Electronic Social Marketing for Disease Screening: Patient & Provider Perceptions**

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# Outline

- Introduction
- Objective
- Methods
- Themes
- Results
- Discussion

# Introduction

- Screening rates sub-optimal for a number of conditions, including HIV
- VA is largest provider of HIV care
- Electronic communications to activate patients
- Veterans Health Administration has 900,000 email addresses

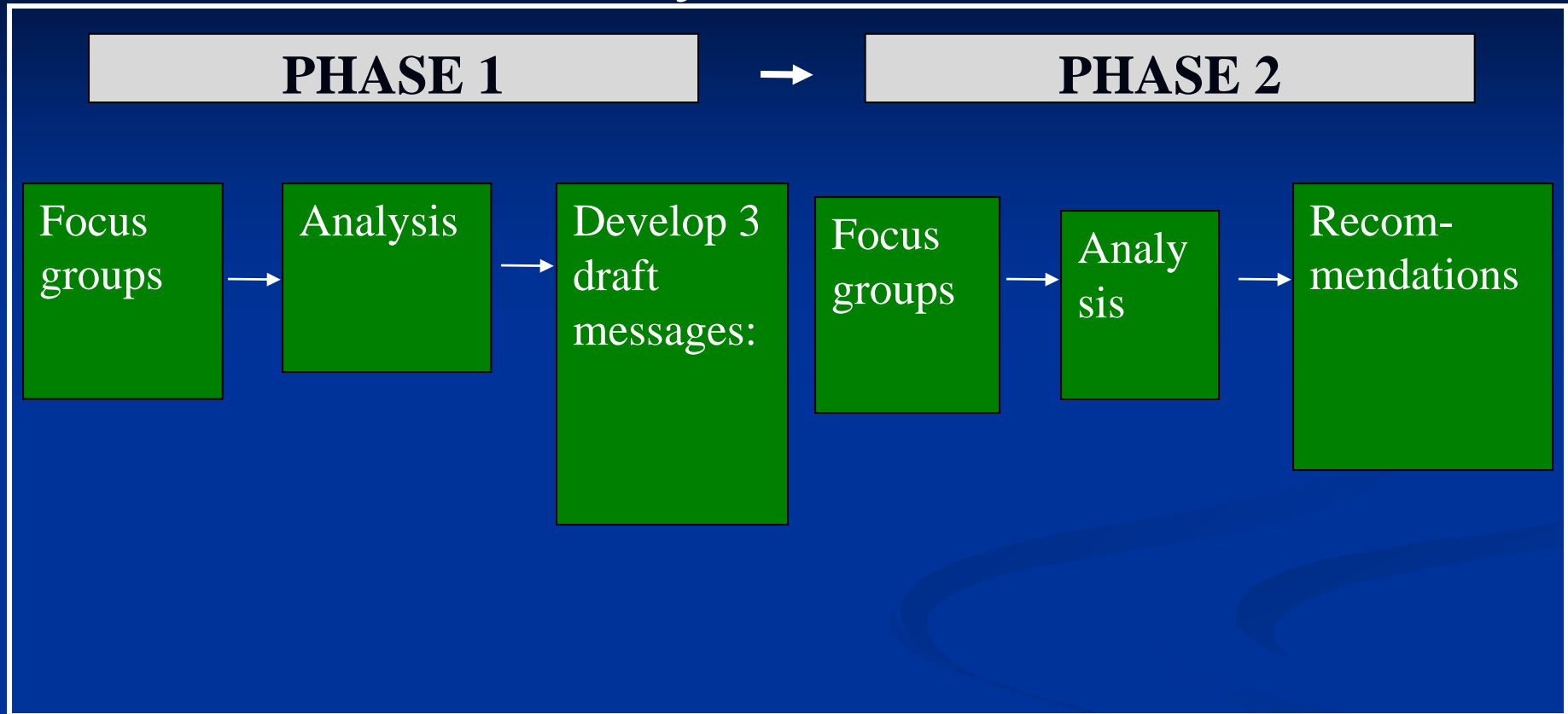
# Objective

- Patient and provider perceptions of a proposed VA electronic social marketing campaign
- Including:
  - HIV vs. other conditions (cholesterol, diabetes)
  - How deliver message (email vs. website)
  - Suggestions of message content

# Methods

- Focus groups: 2 patient & 2 provider groups
- New England VA medical centers
- Two phases
- Analysis using grounded theory methods

# Study Phases



# Participants

	Patients	Providers
Number	6 in group 1 6 in group 2	6 in group 1 9 in group 2
Gender	2 female; 10 male	8 female; 4 male
Race/ Ethnicity	9 white 1 African American 1 Hispanic 1 Pac. Islander	[Not collected]
Education / Training	6 college 3 graduate level 3 not provided	7 nurse practitioners 5 medical doctors
Age	48 to 71 years	46 to 60 years
Internet Use	8 Yes; 4 No	[Not collected]

# Phase I - Questions

“The VA is thinking of sending health messages to veterans who have provided their email addresses. One kind of email message the VA wants to send would encourage veterans to talk to their health care provider about being tested for important diseases (e.g. cholesterol, diabetes, hypertension, cancer).”

- What do you think of this idea? (Pts & PCPs)
- What do you think about the idea of an email about HIV testing? (Pts & PCPs)
- How do you think veterans will react [to an email about HIV testing ]? (PCPs)

# Phase II (draft message text)

***Dear Veteran:***

***Did you know that the VA encourages veterans to get a variety of routine health tests, such as testing for HIV disease?***

## **Why check for HIV disease?**

- Over 1 million Americans have HIV. Unfortunately many people who have HIV don't know they have it because they have never been tested.
- Having HIV but not knowing you have it means that you could spread the virus to other people. Also, untreated HIV causes AIDS, which is a very serious disease.
- The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommends that all adults get tested for HIV.
- If you think you may not have been tested for HIV, or are unsure, ask your provider at your next visit.

# Phase II – Illustrative Questions

## Patients

1. How would you feel about getting this kind of HIV communication?
2. Would you discuss this message with your provider?

## Providers

1. What would it be like for you if the VA used this kind of communication with your patients?
2. What kinds of questions do you think patients would ask you?

# Themes

- Informational/educational benefits (Pts. & PCPs)
- Potential privacy concerns (Pts. & PCPs)
- Providers anticipated increased work flow.
- Few patient concerns about HIV information (Web option); PCP were ambivalent.

# Theme: Information / Education

“...my father has diabetes. My mother is borderline... I’ve been checked periodically and I don’t seem to be having it... [But] It might slip my mind where I’m not thinking I’m going to get it...and then all of a sudden I see [the electronic message about diabetes screening] and I say, ‘Maybe I ought to go and have it checked.’ So it’s kind of like a kick in the pants.”

*- Patient*

# Theme: Privacy / Confidentiality

“And I think if you sent them an email, there are some people who might be walking in the next day, ‘I got this email that told me to come in and be tested! ...Why are you worried? ...Why'd you send it to me? Did you send it to anybody else?’”

*- PCP*

## Theme: Provider Burden

“If the VA is going to send out a newsletter, ...especially if you're sending it electronically, you're going to get this flood of phone calls. You've got to have your telephone staff prepared. You have to have your primary care nursing staff prepared, your primary care provider staff. Because these things have this, like, *volcano effect*.”

*- PCP*

# Theme: HIV Content (Patients)

“I wouldn’t mind [getting a message about HIV testing]; it’s pasted all over the walls of the VA. I mean, I think the information is good.”

*- Patient*

## Theme: HIV Content (Providers)

“But this third [draft message] about HIV is like a bombshell. I think we have to make sure that the providers know that the CDC recommends all adults be tested. If my patient came in and said something that I don’t know, like they’ve seen it on TV, that’s very uncomfortable for me.”

*- PCP*

# E-Social Marketing for Disease Screening: Recommendations

- Avoid personal email. Post material on Web.
- Appropriate reading level. Links if needed.
- Involve providers early.
- Heed provider claims of increasing workloads.

# Thank You

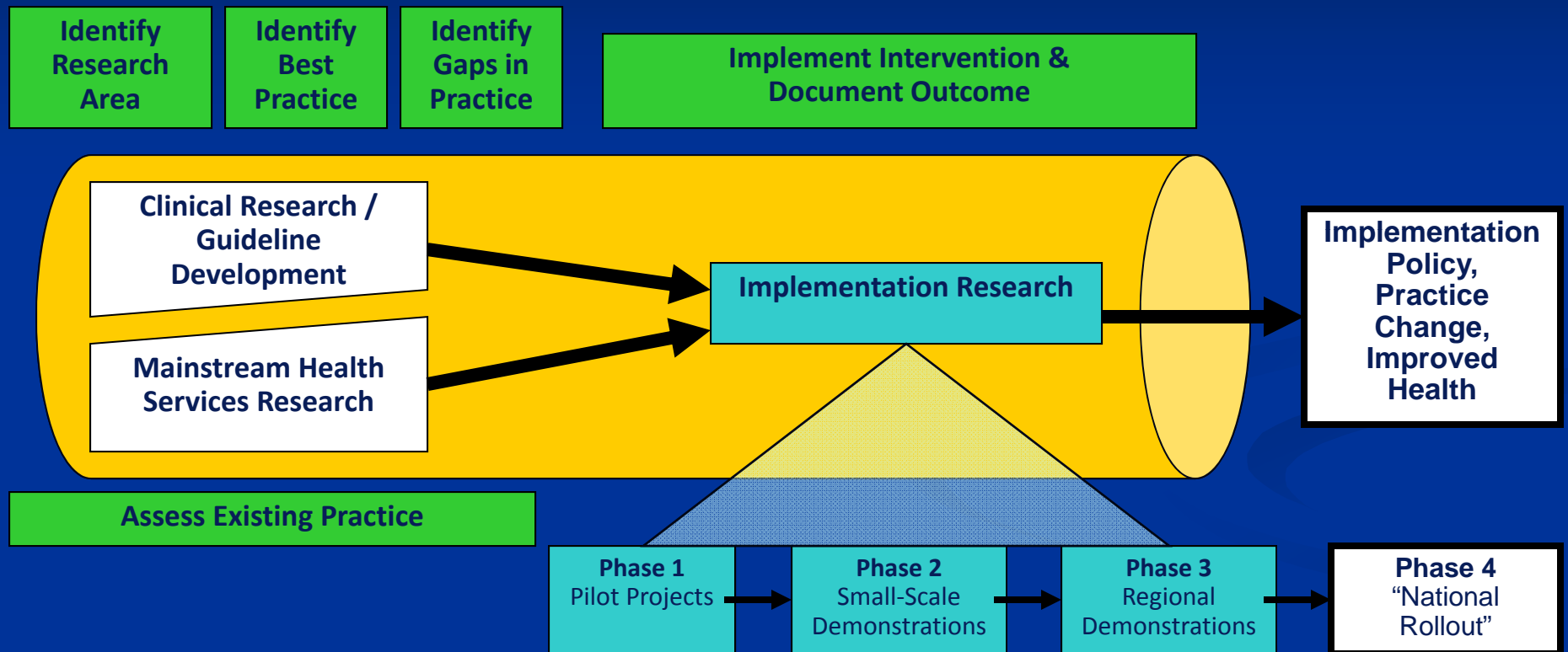
Contact: [Keith.McInnes@va.gov](mailto:Keith.McInnes@va.gov)

## Theme: Information / Education

‘I think all this information would be great. Because I think how else are we going to know what to do with the only true asset we own [which] is our body. And some people spend more time getting the oil changed in their car than they do worrying about what’s going on in [their bodies].’

*- Patient*

# QUERI's Research/Implementation Pipeline



# Implementation

- Feedback early in implementation process
- Make as realistic as possible
- Phased input