



251 Use of Facebook Advertising to Direct a Targeted Audience to Educational Webpages on Reducing Poisonings from Flea and Tick Control Treatments

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Exhibit Hall Section 1, Dena'ina Convention Center

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BACKGROUND: New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) staff identified more than 600 exposure calls to the two poison control centers in New York State between 1/1/2010 and 12/31/2014 where flea and/or tick was in the product name. While the majority of the calls had symptoms mild enough to be treated at home, 16.6% were referred to and/or treated at a health care facility. Symptoms experienced by cases reported to the poison control center include abdominal pain, vomiting, chest pain, shortness of breath, ocular irritation, dermal irritation/rash, dizziness, and headache. The majority (60%) of the cases were over the age of 20, and 29% of the cases were under the age of 6.

METHODS: To raise awareness of the risks associated with improper use of flea and tick control products and to reduce poisonings, a new webpage and an educational tip sheet was developed that included real stories and action steps. A social media campaign, that included sponsored Facebook ads, was undertaken to direct people to the new webpage and downloadable tip sheet. The media campaign was contracted out to a company specializing in media and marketing. This company was responsible for researching and identifying the target audience for the campaign,

and delivering the social media campaign messages to the identified audience. The campaign included 9 different sponsored Facebook ads, 5 directed to pet owners and 4 directed to veterinarians in the New York area (excluding New York City). The campaign was tracked to determine the number of impressions, clicks through to the NYSDOH website, shares, and likes for each of the ads. The campaign ran from June 3, 2015 to June 26, 2015.

RESULTS: The posts had over 900,000 Facebook impressions during the 24 day campaign period, with nearly 20,000 clicking through to the NYSDOH website page on reducing poisonings from flea and tick control treatments. The click through rate was higher among veterinarians (3.06%) than pet owners (1.73%) and varied for the different ads that were posted. In addition to website click through, the ads received approximately 5,000 likes, 1,000 shares, and 100 positive comments.

CONCLUSIONS: Education materials are posted on health department websites but may have very little reach into the community the materials are targeting. By using a Facebook advertising campaign that identified and directed targeted audiences to our materials, we were able to substantially increase the visibility of our materials.

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