



UNIVERSITY  
OF WOLLONGONG  
AUSTRALIA

University of Wollongong  
Research Online

---

Faculty of Social Sciences - Papers

Faculty of Social Sciences

---

2012

# It's only scary if it's about me or my child: Different responses to emotional appeals targeting asthma awareness

Sandra C. Jones

*University of Wollongong*, [sandraj@uow.edu.au](mailto:sandraj@uow.edu.au)

Samantha L. Reis

*University of Wollongong*, [sreis@uow.edu.au](mailto:sreis@uow.edu.au)

Karen M. Larsen-Truong

*University of Wollongong*, [karenlt@uow.edu.au](mailto:karenlt@uow.edu.au)

---

## Publication Details

Jones, S. C., Reis, S. L. & Larsen-Truong, K. M. (2012). It's only scary if it's about me or my child: Different responses to emotional appeals targeting asthma awareness. In R. Lee (Eds.), *Australia New Zealand Marketing Academy Conference 2012: Proceedings* (pp. 1-1). Ehrenberg-Bass Institute for Marketing Science: Ehrenberg-Bass Institute for Marketing Science, Edith Cowan University.

Research Online is the open access institutional repository for the University of Wollongong. For further information contact the UOW Library: [research-pubs@uow.edu.au](mailto:research-pubs@uow.edu.au)

---

# It's only scary if it's about me or my child: Different responses to emotional appeals targeting asthma awareness

## **Abstract**

Abstract presented at Australian and New Zealand Marketing Academy Conference, Adelaide, 3-5 Dec 2012

## **Keywords**

about, if, scary, awareness, only, asthma, targeting, appeals, emotional, responses, different, child, my, me

## **Disciplines**

Education | Social and Behavioral Sciences

## **Publication Details**

Jones, S. C., Reis, S. L. & Larsen-Truong, K. M. (2012). It's only scary if it's about me or my child: Different responses to emotional appeals targeting asthma awareness. In R. Lee (Eds.), Australia New Zealand Marketing Academy Conference 2012: Proceedings (pp. 1-1). Ehrenberg-Bass Institute for Marketing Science: Ehrenberg-Bass Institute for Marketing Science, Edith Cowan University.

## **It's only scary if it's about me or my child: Different responses to emotional appeals targeting asthma awareness**

Sandra C. Jones\*. *University of Wollongong*. [sandraj@uow.edu.au](mailto:sandraj@uow.edu.au)

Samantha Reis. *University of Wollongong*. [sreis@uow.edu.au](mailto:sreis@uow.edu.au)

Karen Larsen-Truong. *University of Wollongong*. [karenlt@uow.edu.au](mailto:karenlt@uow.edu.au)

Keywords: social marketing, asthma, emotional appeals, segmentation

### **Abstract**

Asthma is a significant health problem in Australia, affecting one in ten children and adults (Australian Centre for Asthma Monitoring, 2011). Complacency from the general public regarding the severity of the condition hampers treatment seeking and contemplation of behaviour change (Andrews & Jones, 2009). Emotional appeals, such as fear campaigns, have long been utilised in social marketing; however, the efficacy of emotional appeals in asthma campaigns has not been established. This research examined which emotional appeals were most effective in increasing self-management and donation behavioural intentions.

The first phase of the study involved the development and testing of stimulus materials to encourage asthma sufferers to better manage their asthma and encourage non-asthmatics to donate to asthma causes. Six focus groups (three with asthmatics, three with non-asthmatics), with a total of 32 participants, were conducted. The results from the focus groups were used to modify the advertisements in order to ensure that they were acceptable and understandable to the target audience, and engendered the appropriate emotional and efficacy responses.

An online survey was conducted to test the efficacy of nine different advertisements (variations of high fear, low fear and positive appeals) in changing asthma self-management and donation behavioural intentions; respondents were 386 asthmatics, 90 parents of children with asthma, and 121 non-asthmatics. The self-reported emotional responses demonstrate that our condition manipulation was effective. Among *asthmatics* we found that the most effective execution for all three response variables was high-fear/low-efficacy, followed by high-fear/high-efficacy for self-management intentions and low-fear/low-efficacy for information seeking intentions. This is counter to the prevailing view in the fear appeal literature that high-fear messages are maximally effective when accompanied by an efficacy message (Witte & Allen 2000); we discuss possible explanations for this finding. Among *parents of children* with asthma we found no significant difference in behavioural intentions by type of message viewed; it is likely that this reflects a type of ceiling effect, behavioural intentions were improved regardless of the message they were exposed to. Among *non-asthmatics* (who were targeted with messages about *donating to asthma organisations*), we found the reverse effect; that is the absence of difference between the three executions reflected lack of intention to donate or to seek information regardless of the message viewed.

### **References**

- Andrews, K.L. & Jones, S.C. (2009). "We would have got it by now if we were going to get it..." An analysis of asthma awareness and beliefs in older adults. *Health Prom J Australia*, 20(2), 146-50.
- Australian Centre for Asthma Monitoring. (2011). *Asthma in Australia 2011* (AIHW Asthma Series no. 4. Cat. no. ACM 22). Canberra: AIHW.
- Witte, K. & Allen, M. (2000). A meta-analysis of fear appeals: Implications for effective public health campaigns. *Health Educ Behav*, 27(5), 591-615.