Preferences for Type of Communication Mode from VA during Natural Disasters: Results from the VA Preparedness Communication Survey (VAPCS)

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BACKGROUND
- No studies describe VA patients’ preferences for how to receive information from the VA during large-scale disasters
- VEMEC conducted the VA Preparedness Communications Survey (VAPCS) with VA-users who lived in the Northeast U.S. (areas impacted by Hurricane Sandy in 2012)

OBJECTIVE
- VAPCS evaluated VA patients’ communication preferences for receiving information from VA in case of natural disasters

METHODS
- 10-15 minute survey was fielded in Aug-Nov 2015 using three-sequential mode approach (web, mail, telephone)
- Sample size: 2,264 VA-users

CONCLUSION
- All VA patients, regardless of age, preferred Telephone
- Age was most the important predictor of communication
- Younger VA-users preferred Email or Text
- Older VA-users preferred TV or Radio
- Multiple modes of communication are necessary to effectively contact all patients at the VA during large-scale emergencies

VAPCS Sample Characteristics (n=2,264):
- 63.5 (mean age & 95% CI: 63.1-63.9)
- 93% male
- 77% white
- 63% married
- 38% high school or less education
- 50% retired
- 39% earned less than $30,000 in annual income

RESULTS

Methods of Communication Preference:
- Top 3 reported helpful* communication methods by age:
  - < 45: Telephone, Text, Email
  - 45-64: Telephone, Radio, TV
  - 65+: Telephone, TV, Radio
- Older VA-users less likely to prefer Text, MyHealtheVet, Facebook or Twitter


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age group (%)**</th>
<th>&lt; 45</th>
<th>45-64</th>
<th>65+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>678</td>
<td>821</td>
<td>765</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MyHealtheVet</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitter</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*VAPCS Survey Question: How helpful would you find each type of communication from the VA in the event of a natural disaster in your area? Helpful defined: "extremely helpful", "very helpful", "somewhat helpful" and "a little helpful."

**All p-values <0.001; p-values for comparing differences between age groups: based on chi-square tests

Notes: Missing responses to communication preference varied by age group: <45, 0-1% missing; 45-64, 8-12% missing; and 65+, 7-32% missing

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In an Emergency, Every Community is a Veteran Community