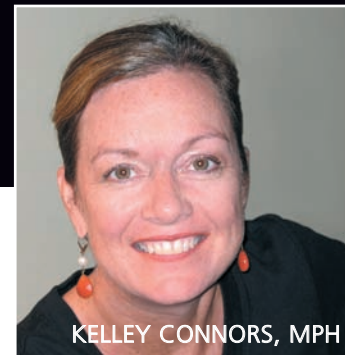


Contributed by Kelley Connors, MPH



KELLEY CONNORS, MPH

WOMEN ARE THE SALES "FORCE"

Pharmaceutical companies that tap into women's power to influence health decisions for family, friends, and communities are finding the ultimate tipping point. Picture women as the hub in the center of a wheel. The wheel represents women as influencers, as caregivers, as community leaders, and as careerists. They make 85% of healthcare decisions and purchase 75% of OTC products. More than 70% of caregivers are working women, and 95% of women are knowledgeable about diagnosis and treatment of diseases their parents suffer from.

Women represent an information-hungry audience and are a catalyst for disease-awareness, brand-building, reputation management and, most importantly, trust-building campaigns. Through education and information that sparks dialogues among women and those factors that influence them — the media, healthcare professionals, advocacy groups, government organizations — companies can inspire action to meet communication or business goals. More importantly to pharmaceutical marketers, women are taking a multidimensional and integrated view of health, emphasizing body, mind, and spirit.

WOMEN AS INFLUENCERS

While women are consumers of women's health products, they also influence their male friends and family. Currently, the American Cancer Society is advocating awareness of colorectal exams for middle-aged men. Not unhip to the idea that women value family health above all else, the society's TV ad featuring "Ann" on "Ted's" back reminds women to "stay on your husband's back" until they go for the colorectal exam. At the same time, the commercial acknowledges that women get tested too. This is a transparent way to reach women while not isolating men. The important point is that women help to increase cancer screenings and, thereby, lower death rates from colorectal cancer.

WOMEN AS COMMUNITY LEADERS

Women in community leadership positions are a bridge to spark dialogues with mothers, sisters, grandmothers, working women, caregivers, the media, and policymakers. Once their priorities and pressures are understood, they can be inspired to mobilize their community around prevention and treatment messages that are community-relevant. Community leaders are role models — authentic links to women locally, regionally, and nationally. Within the pharmaceutical industry, the Healthcare Businesswomen's Association creates opportunities for companies to bridge to more than 2,500 members, mostly women, who are dedicated to helping people improve the quality of their lives.

WOMEN AS CAREGIVERS

Almost three-quarters of all caregivers are women between the ages of 45 and 65 years old, and one-third of them are working women. With a strong corporate franchise in meeting women's health and family health needs, Johnson & Johnson has launched a public-awareness initiative and online resource called Strength for

Caring. The educational Website (strengthforcaring.com) supports the caregiver from a mind, body, and spirit perspective and connects women to each other by sparking a dialogue about the challenges of daily living, caregiving, and time management.

WOMEN AS CAREERISTS

Today, 46% of all women are employed in the workforce, and women-owned businesses are opening at a rate double that of businesses owned by men. Through professional networking organizations, marketers can reach women throughout their life stages. For example, a recent survey of members of the National Association for Female Executives (NAFE) revealed the effects of menopause on women in the workplace. It also showed that women are confused about the best way to treat menopausal symptoms. Although most survey respondents consider themselves knowledgeable about the risks and benefits of hormone therapy, more than three of five responded incorrectly when asked to identify specific risks of estrogen therapy on conditions, such as heart attacks and breast cancer. Since the age for menopause ranges between 40 and 58 with an average age of 51 — many years short of the national retirement age of 65 — the study exposed menopause as a significant health issue among female executives who have a need for education and communication.

Today, it is more likely than ever that a physician or an allied healthcare professional will be female, especially in specialties that are associated with more controllable lifestyles, such as radiology, ophthalmology, dentistry, and dermatology. The American Medical Women's Association reports an increasing number of medical schools enrolling a rising number of women. The influence of women as physicians assistants and nurse practitioners on the front line of patient care will only continue to increase.

THE KEYS TO THE KINGDOM

Women are newly empowered decision makers, purchasers, and influencers. Building a brand, enhancing an organization or company's reputation, and building trust takes more than sending out controlled messages that speak to women in their multiple roles. Winning their "minds" and their "hearts" means connecting with them and with their influencers. This gives marketers greater credibility, visibility, and involvement in their lives — whether at home, work, or play — and breaks through the "spin" to build trust, the ultimate tipping point.

Kelley Connors, MPH, is Principal of KC Healthcare Communications LLC, Norwalk, Conn., a consulting firm that works in partnership with healthcare, lifestyle, and advocacy organizations to maximize their outreach to women and their influencers, securing market share and influence. For more information, visit kchealthcarecommunications.com.

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