PhD defense Tine Lewi - Faculty of Applied Economics

“Early diagnosis messages for secondary prevention: drivers for awareness, engagement and participation application to breast cancer screening and Alzheimer's disease.”

Date: 13 March 2017

Venue: Universiteit Antwerpen, Promotiezaal Grauwzusters - Lange Sint-Annastraat 7 - 2000 Antwerp (route: UAntwerpen, Stadscampus)

Time: 5:00 PM

PhD candidate: Tine Lewi

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Co-principal investigator: Prof. dr. Verolien Cauberghe (Univ. Gent)

Short description: PhD defense Tine Lewi - Faculty of Applied Economics

Abstract

This PhD research in health communication investigates health consumers’ reactions to early diagnosis and disease awareness messages for secondary prevention. Secondary prevention interrupts a disease process before it becomes symptomatic and early diagnosis aims at stopping disease progression. Because awareness messages are often calls to actions for specific target groups, addressing health issues, it is important to understand the effectiveness of these messages. In this dissertation, early diagnosis awareness messages have been studied in two application domains, breast cancer and Alzheimer’s disease.

Because these application domains are very different in terms of disease and age groups affected, different message framing strategies are investigated for each of the application domains. In addition to testing a number of message framing strategies (emotional-rational, positive-negative, and type of endorser) in the domain of breast cancer screening, the current dissertation also investigates the effect of personal characteristics on message responses and the role of several mediators (perceived threat, efficacy and anxiety) which could play a role in persuasive communication. For Alzheimer’s disease, argument strength (weak-strong arguments) and image valence (neutral, positive and negative valence) are investigated as framing strategies and message affect and message thoughts are studied as mediators. This dissertation also investigates the use of new applications of social software for secondary prevention.

To that end, part of the research focuses on the development of an interactive information portal for breast cancer information. The research brings academia and practice closer together for the benefit of the health consumer, especially in the area of disease prevention and early diagnosis. Individuals are increasingly urged to enhance and maintain good health and avoid health deterioration in case they are affected by a disease. This dissertation contributes to building knowledge in health communication for disease prevention, complementary to extensive existing communication research in the area of disease management.