Public Health and Pop Culture? Joining the Conversation to Raise Awareness for HIV

Using social media during film and entertainment award shows to link people to testing and care.

April 22, 2015 By Yumna Bahgat

Through our Twitter, Facebook and Instagram channels, we share a wide range of resources on HIV/AIDS and new media. We also share resources during popular cultural events by using hashtags to join the online conversation. For example, during the Super Bowl and Academy Awards, we use #superbowl and #oscars to reach people who may not otherwise see our HIV resources. Not only can we reach a wider audience, but by contributing to the conversation we can add a more personal voice to our accounts.

Our Experience

One example of "joining the conversation" is our use of social media during film and entertainment award shows to link people to HIV testing and care services. With their glamorous red-carpet fashions and memorable acceptance speeches, award shows engage a broad audience, invite real-time social media conversations, and are trending topics in the digital world.

When we started crafting messages to match the award show's theme, we saw an uptake in the number of people we were able to reach, and our posts received more than the usual number of re-tweets and favorites. We also saw an increase in the number of link clicks directing users to the HIV.gov Locator to get an HIV test.

"Join the Conversation"

Are you interested in leveraging hashtags during pop culture events? Here are some tips to get started:

1. Do your research: Before you tweet about a pop culture event or a trending hashtag, do your homework to learn what the event is about, who is sponsoring it, and how other people are using that hashtag. Ideally, you should be able to create an HIV connection to that event, such as a movie or documentary about HIV that you can reference.
2. Be authentic: Take the time to craft a personalized and creative message that is related to the event and to your audience. If possible, live tweet so you can use real-time quotes and engage your audience as the event unfolds.

3. Make it visual: Images and videos garner far more engagement than plain text updates and tweets. We often use tools like Creative Commons to find stock images and Canva to create engaging social media visuals.

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