

# Communications Partnership Benefits Southern California

BY RHODA WEISS

**T**oday's strategic communications need an integrated approach, and savvy healthcare organizations are using a number of media for targeted delivery of messages. As a result, community partnerships are becoming increasingly attractive as a way to share expenses and show "third-party validation" of marketing and public relations efforts.

One such collaboration is a successful partnership between a Southern California health system and television station, who have joined to produce a year-long community service campaign. Memorial Health Services (MHS) and ABC7 offer health, education, and wellness tips through television spots, websites, direct mail, health-related programming, community outreach efforts, and health fairs.

"The focus of the campaign is prevention and early intervention for major healthcare concerns, with an emphasis on how Memorial Health Services can assist people in attaining better health," says Thomas Collins, president/CEO of the five-hospital Memorial Health Services, which includes Anaheim Memorial Medical Center, Long Beach Memorial Medical Center, Orange Coast Memorial Medical Center in Fountain Valley, Saddleback Memorial Medical Center in Laguna Hills, and Miller Children's Hospital in Long Beach.

## TELEVISION HITS THE SPOT

Launched in early 1998, the television campaign consists of more than 600 30- and 60-second spots that feature ABC7 news anchors. The 30-second spots explain to the viewer, "We want you to make smart choices about your health." They name the hospitals and show where they are located on a map of Southern California.

The 60-second pieces are filmed by ABC7 at Memorial Medical Center campuses using actual physicians and patients and their families. "These spots focus on different diseases and aspects of healthcare, such as breast and prostate cancer, diabetes, emergency care, stroke, and heart disease," explains Susan Solomon, executive director of marketing for MemorialCare, MHS's marketing program.



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The 60-second television spots, introduced by an ABC7 anchor, offer brief information on a medical condition presented by a physician; a real patient's and/or family's story; prevention tips from the physician; an action item, such as a booklet on preventing and detecting that particular illness or medical condition; a toll-free number that connects with MemorialCare's call center; and the names and a map of the Memorial Health Services hospitals.

Recently, the partners produced a 60-second piece on open enrollment periods—the time of year when a company's employees choose a health plan for the following year. The spot stresses the importance of reviewing enrollment materials thoroughly and carefully considering the choices. At the end of the spot, the viewer is directed to the toll-free number to obtain a free guide to open enrollment.

## A MULTIFACETED CAMPAIGN

In addition to the television spots, two booklets packed with healthcare tips and medical information reach 400,000 homes through distribution in local newspapers, at key community sites, and in response to requests to the toll-free telephone line. The campaign also includes MemorialCare's website, which is linked to ABC7's website; jointly sponsored health fairs for children and adults; and appearances by members of the ABC7 news team at community healthcare events. As a result of the campaign, Memorial Health Service receives more than 400 telephone calls weekly and its website gets an additional 500 weekly "hits" because of its link with ABC7's website.

Arnold Kleiner, president and general manager of ABC7, is pleased with the partnership. "Healthcare news affects everyone; it can help members of the communities we serve to improve and protect their own lives. By partnering with a local health system with broad geographic coverage and a commitment to medical outcomes, we believe that we can have a positive affect on improving health status and creating healthier communities." □