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Conference Abstract

User-centred improvements to the Diabetes UK online risk score

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Abstract

Introduction: Diabetes UK launched its online risk score www.diabetes.org.uk/riskscore - to test your risk of developing Type 2 diabetes - on 1 July 2010. Answering seven questions gives a score from 1-47, in one of four risk levels: Low, Increased, Moderate, High. If you score Moderate or High we recommend a GP blood test.

The original online tool used photo testimonies of real people, representing the four risk levels, in pop-ups after answering each question, and with the result.

Aims and objectives: We planned a major outdoor and online advertising campaign in autumn 2013 to encourage people to see their GP or take the test online. To optimise the test, we commissioned 1-1 user research, focusing on the most at-risk C2DE socio-economic groups.

This told us we had to improve the online test. Some changes were technology-based (eg advent of touchscreens, responsive mobile) but most were from learning how people used the tool. Our redesign addressed the following issues.

- Users did not measure their weight or waist size. Exacerbated on mobile devices, without access to tape measure or scales – so needing a reminder for mobile users to re-take the test at home.
- Usability issues – eg unable to operate ‘slider’ controls on touchscreens.
- Some just used sliders to estimate a position on a general ‘low to high’ scale.

This under-reporting meant many users would be scoring too low and being placed in the wrong risk band.

- Users were in ‘test mode’ while taking the test, expecting to work their way through questions quickly without distraction – not in ‘learning mode’, and tended to ignore or resent pop-ups.
- Disappointed by brevity of promised ‘full report’, expecting fuller, personalised information and more compelling, practical information about next steps.
- Thought email/social sharing meant results would be shared, not simply the test.
- Would friends/family find it offensive – suggesting they were unhealthy/overweight?

Results: We saw immediate improvement in usage and referral figures following the redesign.

The risk score records every completed test, displaying this on a homepage counter. More detailed reporting was introduced in May 2011, so we only have a breakdown from year two onwards.

The relaunched test saw more uses (29,500) in the two weeks of the ad campaign, than it saw in the previous three months (25,000). But even without advertising to support it, we have seen more uses (105,500) in less than six months since the end of the campaign than we saw in the whole first year (100,000).

Conclusions: In the six months since relaunch, from 135,000 tests, the online risk score has referred 35,282 people at the highest risk of Type 2 diabetes to their GPs.

This compares with 28,833 people referred after 175,000 tests in the previous 27 months, and shows the benefits of the user-centred redesign, supported by focused audience research, and a boost from advertising.

Significantly, the proportion of people being referred increased from 16.5% to 26%, which suggests that the redesign reduced the amount of under-reporting.

Keywords

diabetes; risk; user testing; digital
