Background

In the United States, more than one-fourth of children aged 2-5 and half of those aged 12-15 are affected by tooth decay. An unhealthy mouth impacts a child’s ability to learn, develop self-esteem and speak properly. Furthermore, tooth decay can be associated with physical conditions like obesity, diabetes and heart disease. Oral disease disproportionately affects children from low-income families, who have nearly double the number of cases of untreated dental decay as the general public.1 Many parents are not aware of the severe consequences that can result from poor oral care over time, and they lack information about oral health and preventive care.

To help improve children's oral health habits, the Ad Council and The Partnership for Healthy Mouths, Healthy Lives developed a public service advertising (PSA) campaign. Grey Group and Wing joined the team as the pro bono advertising agencies. The campaign aims to educate parents and caregivers about good oral health habits and motivate them to get their children to brush their teeth for two minutes, twice a day. The long-term campaign goal is to improve children's dental health, so they can develop into healthy adults. The campaign directs parents to the website 2min2x.org, which provides tips for parents and caregivers on how they can teach their children habits.

Strategic and Creative Development

Finding the Core Insight

From the start, we knew that many children were not practicing good oral health habits and that many parents were not prioritizing this issue at home. We opted to speak directly to the parents and caregivers who would have the most influence on their children's habits. Existing research showed that untreated tooth decay disproportionately impacts low-income children, so we opted to conduct strategic research among low-income families, including both English-speaking and Spanish-speaking parents and caregivers of children ages infant to twelve years.

We took a multi-prong research approach in order to explore the current perceptions of oral care benefits and to better understand the barriers and challenges that parents face in getting their children to develop and practice better habits. Ultimately, we wanted to understand the most compelling communications approach that could motivate a change in behavior. Our research included a review of secondary research, consultation with experts to identify messaging priorities, and primary research comprised of in-home ethnographic interviews with low-income mothers in Denver, CO and New York, NY. We completed our research with a nationwide quantitative survey to test different strategic concepts in order to identify which approaches were most relevant and motivating to our target audience.

Through this research, we learned that parents know that their children should be brushing their teeth; however, they lacked understanding of the long-term consequences their children could experience due to poor oral habits. This lack of knowledge coupled with busy lifestyles causes parents not to prioritize oral health care on the list of daily parenting responsibilities. We discovered that parents generally supply their children with the proper tools for good care (e.g. toothbrush, floss), but they rarely monitor how long or how well their children are brushing their teeth or flossing. Furthermore, many parents indicated that brushing typically only occurred once per day. Based on these findings and understanding that parents want what is best for their children, we decided to focus the campaign strategy on making the task urgent yet easy.

We explored a wide range of potential consequences that result from poor oral health. The consequences that were most believable and motivated parents to act were focused on the idea that they could easily prevent their child from oral pain later by dedicating a small amount of time today. Ultimately, the campaign attempts to move parents away from the idea that oral care habits in their home are “good enough” to making it a top priority. Thus,

1 http://www.cdc.gov/chronicdisease/resources/publications/AAG/doh.htm
our main campaign idea became telling parents that by having their kids brush two minutes, twice a day, they will prevent their child from suffering unnecessary dental disease, pain, and potential tooth loss.

**Creative Development**

Grey and Wing developed creative executions for TV, radio, print, outdoor, and digital advertising in both English and Spanish. The advertising uses the notion that kids spend a lot of time doing all sorts of ridiculous things, from dressing up the family pet to watching silly TV programs, so they have the time to spend two minutes brushing their teeth, twice a day. The notion that taking care of teeth is actually quick and easy resonated with parents, who often feel strapped for time on a daily basis. The call-to-action for their child to brush two minutes twice per day made oral care seem manageable, and the benefit of avoiding pain for their child was clear.

The campaign was approved by the Ad Council’s Campaign Review Committee, a peer review group comprised of top executives in the advertising industry. In addition, we conducted qualitative communications checks with the target audience to ensure that the messaging was clearly understood and motivating.

We understood that parents are incredibly busy and wanted to provide them with resources to make “two minutes twice a day” as easy as possible. We developed an engaging website in English and Spanish, as well as mobile, which offers free, two minute videos featuring notable characters from children's shows and networks from partners such as Sesame, Cartoon Network and My Kazoo! The videos are designed to entertain children while they brush their teeth for the full two minutes. The site also includes helpful information about the fundamentals of oral care – brushing, flossing and visiting a dentist.

Following the initial campaign launch, we continued to develop new content beyond traditional PSAs that could reach parents and caregivers through different platforms. A mobile text messaging program for parents provides children's oral health tips to subscribers. A mobile application called Toothsavers has a virtual brushing game for children and includes a fun two minute instructional video for the child to watch while brushing, as well as a running tally of how often the child brushes. We created English and Spanish language brochures, DVDs and stickers for dental offices. And, the campaign has been instrumental in creating a new national in-school oral health education program with Scholastic that aims to reach lower income and minority children and their families.

**Campaign Launch and Public Relations**

The campaign launched in August 2012, and the Ad Council distributed the campaign to more than 33,000 media outlets nationwide. As with all Ad Council PSA campaigns, media is not planned or bought; instead, the campaign relies on media outlets to donate time and space for the ads.

The campaign received extensive public relations coverage, beginning with an exclusive story in The New York Times, with the capacity to reach 1.5 million people, and a placement in Washington Post’s The Checkup Blog that resulted in 2,400 tweets and 6,600 Facebook shares. Momentum continued to build for the campaign by creating compelling online content, leveraging key influencers in the medical and dental community as well as celebrity talent, and securing high profile coverage including Steve Harvey, People.com, MSNBC, Huffington Post Live, and a segment on Good Afternoon America. In April 2013, athlete and mom Laila Ali became a spokesperson for the campaign, participating in a series of national media interviews.

**Evaluating Campaign Impact**

**Exposure**

The Children’s Oral Health campaign has received tremendous media exposure through widespread TV, radio, print, outdoor and digital PSAs in both English and Spanish. The campaign has been embraced by media outlets throughout the country, which have donated more than $57 million in free ad time and space. It’s consistently been ranked among the top Ad Council campaigns in terms of donated network cable and broadcast TV, as well as earned PR support.

Beyond traditional media support, the reach of in-school partnership was more than 23 million pre-Kindergarten, Kindergarten and 1st grade teachers, students and parents.
**DONATED MEDIA SUPPORT: AUGUST 2012 – MARCH 2014**

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**Consumer Response**

From the campaign launch in August 2012 through April 2014, there were more than 1.7 million U.S. visits to the English-language campaign website, 2min2x.org. During this same time period, there were more than 177,000 video views of the free, two-minute videos that kids can watch while brushing their teeth. On average, site visitors spent 6 minutes on the Watch & Brush page, where the videos are available. The Spanish-language site also received healthy traffic, with more than 70,000 visits and over 6,000 video views.

**Awareness, Attitudes, and Behaviors**

A tracking survey is one of several evaluation components that the Ad Council uses to evaluate a campaign’s impact. The survey for the Children’s Oral Health campaign, administered to English and Spanish-speaking parents, measured trends in PSA recognition and relevant attitudes and behaviors, including children’s teeth brushing habits. The benchmark survey was fielded in August 2012 prior to campaign launch, and a follow-up survey was conducted in June/July 2013.

**Key Findings**

The tracking study findings indicate many positive trends in the first year of the campaign, from 2012 to 2013. Overall, more parents reported regularly monitoring and maintaining their child’s oral health and that their children are regularly brushing. Specifically, we found:

- More than 50 percent of parents surveyed have seen or heard the campaign PSAs.
- After one year, significantly more parents report that their child brushes at least twice a day.
  (English-speaking parents: 48% in 2012 → 55% in 2013; Spanish-speaking parents: 69% → 77%).
- Parents in 2013 were also more likely to report that their child brushes for at least two minutes each time
  (English-speaking parents: 60% in 2012 → 64% in 2013; Spanish-speaking parents: 69% → 77%).
- An increased number of parents report being “good” or “very good” at making sure their child brushes:
  - At least twice a day, (English-speaking parents: 60% in 2012 → 65% in 2013; Spanish-speaking parents: 73% → 77%).
  - For two minutes each time (English-speaking parents: 53% in 2012 → 58% in 2013; Spanish-speaking parents: 75% → 79%).

**Conclusion**

One year into the Children’s Oral Health campaign, we have seen high recognition of the advertising, strong engagement online and significant shifts in key behaviors among low-income parents. The key message in the PSA campaign—that children should be brushing two times twice a day—is reaching parents, and we are already seeing that more children are taking the recommended actions to reduce oral health pain now and in the future. Moving forward, we plan to build upon the initial success through additional PSAs, digital tools, and partnerships to bring our messaging to more parents and caregivers.
BRUSH 2 MINUTES, TWICE A DAY

Kids will spend 11 minutes dressing Spike up like a princess. How about two minutes to brush their teeth?

Brushing for two minutes now can save your child from severe tooth pain later. Two minutes, twice a day. They have the time. For fun, 2-minute videos to watch while brushing, go to 2min2x.org.

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