

# Encyclopedia of Health Communication

## Mexico

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The United Mexican States is a democratic republic comprised of 31 states and the Federal District. Mexico is the fifth-largest country in the Americas, and the International Organization for Standardization ranks Mexico as the 11th-most populous country in the world. The national health system in Mexico is administered by national, federal, public, and private entities. The system is currently undergoing substantial changes as it contends with shifting health issues, including a decrease in overall general mortality, an increase in noncommunicable diseases, and an increase in the mortality rate related to chronic diseases. Because a focus on global health is resulting in increased health communication scholarship and inquiry, the status of public health in Mexico is of relevance to health communication scholars around the globe.

Among Mexico's key health problems, the increase in noncommunicable diseases is of critical importance. Noncommunicable diseases refer to medical conditions that are not infectious or transmittable. The World Economic Forum has described noncommunicable diseases as a threat to global economic development, with greater repercussions than fiscal crises, natural disasters, or even infectious diseases. In Mexico, diabetes mellitus, cancer, stroke, obesity, hypertension, liver disease, lung disease, and kidney disease are all noncommunicable diseases listed among the top causes of death.

Among these health problems is heart disease, the leading cause of death in Mexico. The Mexican National System of Health Information (SINAIS) estimates that more than 92,000 people, or 17.2 percent of the population, die of ischemic heart disease each year. Diabetes mellitus is the second-leading cause of death in the country. The International Diabetes Federation ranks Mexico seventh in the world in the number of people with diabetes, and the World Health Organization estimates that diabetes and its complications account for 13 percent of the total deaths in Mexico, or more than 75,000 lives. Reports generated by the Mexican National Institute of Statistics and Geography and the Mexican Ministry of Health (SSA) indicate that malignant tumors come in third, claiming the lives of more than 67,000 people a year. Although the rate of communicable diseases has decreased, influenza, pneumonia, tuberculosis, and the human papillomavirus (HPV) remain among the top causes of mortality in the nation.

# Addressing Mexico's Critical Health Issues

Mexico's Secretariat of Health (SSA), the government agency that oversees social assistance programs, medical services, and public health issues, offers directives for the implementation of health communication campaigns and programs to target the country's salient health issues. The SSA as well as nonprofit organizations and health communication and media specialists are constantly developing and introducing health campaigns to deliver information and to promote good health and disease prevention. The campaigns have targeted a variety of publics and used a wide range of messages and channels.

In 2006, the SSA launched the \$7 million El Paraíso de los Fumadores. Fumar Mata (The Smokers' Paradise. Smoking Kills) campaign. The campaign was diffused through national radio, television, and print ads. The spots featured a world (paradise) where smoking was unrestricted and inferred that the individuals in that paradise [p. 876 ↓ ] had all died due to tobacco use. The campaign was touted as both innovative and controversial. Reviews by members of the Comité Interinstitucional para la Lucha Contra el Tabaco (The Inter-institutional Committee for the Fight Against Tobacco) and the National Council Against Addiction called the campaign confusing, permissive, and negative. In addition, reports by the SSA indicated that after two weeks, 19- to 29-year-olds could not recall the campaign messages alluding to the negative effects of smoking tobacco.

In 2010, the SSA developed a series of radio, television, and cinema spots designed to deliver information about immunizations, influenza, and drug and alcohol prevention. The immunization campaign featured family-oriented ads that encouraged parents to vaccinate young children. The drug and alcohol prevention campaign targeted young adults. It was developed to create awareness of the Centros Nueva Vida (New Life Centers), places where at-risk teenagers can go to receive information about the prevention of drug, alcohol, and tobacco addictions. The television and one-minute cinema spots for this campaign featured young adults attempting to help friends, or who found themselves in precarious circumstances due to drug- or alcohol-related problems. Radio spots were used to diffuse the immunization campaign, which specifically targeted females at higher risk of contracting influenza or the H1N1 virus.

In 2011, the Fundación Interamericana del Corazón México (Mexican chapter of the Inter-American Foundation of the Heart) and the Fundación Científica AstraZeneca (AstraZeneca Scientific Foundation) launched the *Salvemos el Corazón de las Mujeres* (Let's Save the Women's Heart) campaign. The public health effort targeted women 35 years and older and was designed to develop awareness about cardiovascular disease and to highlight prevention and early detection. The campaign featured several high-profile Mexican celebrities including Yuri, Talina Fernández, and Leticia Calderón. As part of the campaign, a mobile unit visited specific towns to provide women with free lipid testing, blood pressure readings, and height and weight measurements. Celebrity sponsors encouraged Mexican women to adopt healthy eating and exercise habits and to stop smoking. The campaign received 47,288 likes on Facebook.

Various health campaigns in Mexico have focused specifically on drawing attention to diabetes and its comorbid conditions. Mexico's *Alianza por la Salud Alimenticia* (Alliance for a Healthy Diet) in 2012 launched a campaign against consumption of carbonated beverages. The alliance cited the high consumption of carbonated drinks as a risk factor for obesity and diabetes in the Mexican population. The campaign, launched exclusively in the Federal District of Mexico, centered on amputations and blindness as major consequences of poor dietary choices. The messages featured photographs of individuals with diabetes who had lost their limbs or eyesight or who had died due to the disease. Each ad contained one visual combined with one question requiring the target market to reflect on the relationship between diabetes and soda consumption. The campaign was diffused through ads in the public transportation system, including highly transited metro stations, and via billboards strategically placed throughout the Federal District.

Another diabetes campaign, *La Frontera Está Tomando Medidas* (The Border is Taking Steps), focused exclusively on diabetes awareness and prevention on the Mexican cities bordering the United States. The campaign comprised a joint effort between the *Comisión de Salud Fronteriza Mexico-Estados Unidos* (CSFMEU), the ministries of health in various Mexican states along the United States-Mexico border, and the support of *Instituto Mexicano de Investigación de Familia y Población* (Mexican Institute of Population and Family Research). Statistics provided by the Pan American Health Organization indicate that Type 2 diabetes is more prevalent among Mexicans living in that region than it is in the rest of the United States or Mexico.

To target this population, the campaign implemented a series of health communication strategies, including the training of health promoters, the development of brochures and health guides, the dissemination of health information through mass media, and the evaluation of educational materials and the scale-up feasibility of the campaign.

## Conclusion

Scholars in Mexico are actively engaged in health communication efforts for the prevention, detection, diagnosis, and treatment of the country's [p. 877 ↓ ] key health problems. Their efforts and initiative provide communication scholars with material for further inquiry into the health communication campaign process for newly industrialized nations.

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See Also:

- [Bolivia](#)
- [Campaign Effects Versus Effectiveness](#)
- [Cancer: Risk Communication](#)
- [Diabetes](#)
- [Disease Prevention](#)
- [Drug and Alcohol Abuse Minimization](#)
- [Exercise](#)
- [Human Papillomavirus](#)
- [Immunizations](#)
- [Influenza A Virus Subtype H1N1](#)
- [Nutrition and Diet](#)

### Further Readings

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