

Behind ballsy Speedos

DAREDEVIL RUN: SPREAD THE MESSAGE, NOT THE CANCER,

» Race grows in leaps and bounds, raising funds for Cansa to create awareness.

Adriaan Roets

The Daredevil Run has grown into a behemoth social event where men (yes, men only) don a teeny tiny purple Speedo to create a social and fundraising campaign to inform more men about prostate and testicular cancers.

But behind the work, sits The Cancer Association of South Africa (Cansa) that also helps to ensure the right information gets spread during the annual Hollard Daredevil Run.

Here is Lucy Balona, head of marketing and communication, take on the run's rise and it's effectiveness.

Do you think the message reaches the right audience?

Yes we do, we're seeing men share stories with us where they know of a family member or friend that is being diagnosed or getting tested. There are many men that participate annually in this event and diarise it. They encourage others to take part and by doing so spread a valuable health message.

A strong part of the run is the message about educating and encouraging men to know more about cancers affecting them specifically. We still need to do much more in many communities but the funds raised help us to educate and reach men in rural or regional towns and cities with screening and information via the MANVan initiative.

Why is it so difficult for men (especially over 40) to get checked?

It's partly to do with myths and stigmas that are still deeply rooted amongst many cultures, it can also be a lack of education and access to medical facilities. Men may be fearful of getting tested.

Added to that, there is still a general patriarchal society of men who feel that they need to be tough and that health is not a priority. Some men 'fear the finger'. An initial cancer screening test is the Prostate Specific Antigen (PSA) blood test to test for PSA levels, a protein produced by the prostate.

High levels may indicate inflammation or cancer. If abnormal, only then does the person get referred for a digital rectal exam.

Screening aims to detect cancer before symptoms appear.

Do you think that the cam-



Pictures: Supplied

paings that run at schools during the build-up to Daredevil Run is effective in educating boys early on?

Yes, it's very important, as testicular cancer affects many young boys. It's also an opportunity to educate the boys about prostate cancer that may affect them later in life.

It's very beneficial to teach young people in general about being conscious of their health and knowing how to lower their cancer risk.

We teach young men how to do testicular self-examinations and also warning signs – all info that can potentially save a life.

What other programmes does Cansa run outside the Daredevil run that's effective?

We're constantly running health awareness, service delivery or fundraising activities country wide to ensure that information and education on ways to lower the cancer risk remains top of mind and that those affected by cancer know that there is support and info to help them cope with their cancer journey.

What has been the most effective way so far to drive the message that men should get their prostate and testicles checked?

Certainly the Daredevil Run has gained lots of attention.

info

- ▶ Men over 40 who entered the race can get a PSA screening next week at the Hollard Campus, 22 Oxford Rd, Parktown: March 13 between 12pm and 6pm, March 14 between 12pm and 6pm and March 15 between 6am and 1pm.
- ▶ The Daredevil Run takes place next Friday.
- ▶ Enter at daredevilrun.com

PSA tests are offered to the men (over 40) when they come to collect the run packs at the Hollard offices next week.

PSA testing is also offered at the run March 15. So this allows many men to be screened. And also the MANVan goes out for screening the entire year and offers health messaging and cancer screening.

Another successful campaign has been the Testimonial campaign where videos and a special website was produced to encourage men to learn more about testicular cancer (testimonials.co.za)

Have you also been targeting wives or women to get involved to get their husbands or partners checked?

Yes, women play a huge role in

that they tend to be the caretakers and are influencers on the lives of male loved ones. A mother can ensure she educates young men about lumps in the testicles and doing self-examinations and a wife can encourage her husband to get a medical check and do a PSA test.

What are the current stats in SA with regards to diagnoses of prostate and testicular cancer?

Prostate cancer is the most frequently diagnosed cancer among men in over half the countries of the world, including much of sub-Saharan Africa. It is the leading cause of cancer death among men in 46 countries, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa and the Caribbean.

Based on statistics from the US and UK, we estimate that about one in nine white men are likely to be affected by prostate cancer in SA, and about one in six black South African men are likely to be affected.

Annually, what do you look forward to during Daredevil Run?

The incredible vibe and seeing how men are there for their mates or a family member or someone they know who is affected by cancer. And also how there are many boys who come and take part with their dad or big brother – so it becomes a super important health message for families.