

RESEARCH REVIEW FINDINGS
ROYAL LIFE SAVING SOCIETY OF WA
KEEP WATCH AMBASSADOR PROGRAM

COLLABORATION FOR EVIDENCE, RESEARCH & IMPACT IN PUBLIC HEALTH

BACKGROUND

Ambassadors and other personal influence based roles such as champions and peers have been used in public health across a range of health issues and contexts. The premise, consistent with constructs of Social Cognitive Theory [1] and Diffusion of Innovations [2] is that the social influence of key or popular opinion leaders can be harnessed to spread ideas and practices within and between groups, communities and populations. Such individuals may be recruited by organisations as they are seen to have power or influence because of a high-profile public role, because they may be seen as a celebrity or ‘influencer’, or because they may have lived experience relevant to a particular cause. Interpersonal and professional contacts within and between networks may be important influences in motivating changes in practices and norms and consequently, organisations may benefit from the use of such social influence strategies to amplify messages and program impact.

Ambassador programs have previously been shown to have benefits for both the ambassadors and the individuals who seek out those ambassadors. In the context of injury prevention, ambassadors who have previous experience and choose to share their real-life and personal anecdotes appear to be able to engage with parents and other adults to increase child injury susceptibility and encourage supervision of children when placed in riskier situations [3, 4]. However, ambassador programs that are related to drowning prevention have not previously been overtly explored in academia. The Keep Watch Ambassador Program is one strategy utilised by Royal Life Saving Society Western Australia (RLSSWA) as part of a multi-faceted approach to prevent child and toddler drowning. The strategy contributes to the previous Australian Water Safety Strategy 2016-2020 objective to *focus attention on the full* burden of children drowning, including non-fatal drowning and impacts on families [5]. Together with ambassador programs highlighted as a potential strategy in the recently released Australian Water Safety Strategy 2030 [6].

The Keep Watch Ambassador Program began in 2001 with one parent ambassador. Since then the program has grown, with eight parents currently involved as Program Ambassadors. Ambassadors approach RLSSWA following a fatal or non-fatal drowning incident to express an interest in being part of the Keep Watch Ambassador Program, and a desire to share their story to encourage parents and carers of children under five years to engage with safety messages and anecdotes in order to reduce the risk of toddler and child drowning in Western Australia. Once the Ambassadors are recruited RLSSWA offer a range of advocacy, awareness raising and/or media and public relations events. Before events the RLSSWA Media Manager and/or Keep Watch project staff brief the Ambassador on the campaign messages, pertinent issues and likely questions they may be asked. Ambassadors also interact with RLSSWA stakeholders on social media, sharing and commenting on relevant posts. In addition video recordings of Ambassador stories are available on the RLSSWA website [7]. Relationships with the Ambassadors are managed on an ad-hoc basis, with regular communication during the year to provide them with updates on program activities.

To better understand the role of ambassadors as a public health strategy in the drowning prevention context, a review of the Ambassador Program was proposed. The review forms part of a suite of evaluation initiatives undertaken by the Collaboration for Evidence, Research and Impact in Public Health (CERIPH) at Curtin University. The review of the Keep Watch Parent Ambassador Program aims to:

- Assess the impact of using ambassador stories when promoting toddler drowning prevention;
- Determine the value of the ambassador role to the ambassadors; and
- Identify how RLSSWA’s relationship with ambassadors may be improved.

In order to meet these objectives, a five-stage, mixed method approach was proposed:

- 1). Review of the literature;
- 2). Summary of Keep Watch Ambassadors’ stories and messages on RLSSWA website;
- 3). Analysis of media monitors and current involvement of ambassadors in news and media;

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- 4). In-depth, semi-structured interviews held with key Keep Watch Ambassadors (n=8); and
- 5). Case studies reviewing ambassador involvement in the Keep Watch Program (n=4).

The review will be undertaken in three stages:

Stage 1: Formative findings from rapid desktop review (March 2021)

Stage 2: Data collection and analysis; Provision of basic findings against program objectives (June 2021)

Stage 3: Delivery of case studies (September 2021)

This report forms the first stage of the Keep Watch Parent Ambassador review. It delivers top line research findings, including a review of the literature, an audit of the Keep Watch Ambassador webpages and summary of media use over the past five years.

APPROACH

LITERATURE REVIEW

A rapid desktop review was undertaken of English language articles in the peer-reviewed and grey literature published between 2011 and 2020.

For the peer-reviewed literature, a search strategy was developed with a Curtin University Resource Librarian. This search included an initial extraction of articles (n= 17) from two databases (Medline and CINAHL) using search terms (*program development AND drowning*) OR (*program* or campaign* or promotion* or initiative**) OR (*Primary Prevention/ or Program Development/ or Program Evaluation/*) AND [*drown**] OR (*Drowning/ or Near Drowning/*) AND (*ambassador**). Two researchers reviewed the title and abstract of articles and finalised the articles for inclusion (n=11).

A second search was conducted and additional articles were extracted from ProQuest, using search terms (*ambassador* OR champion*) AND (*injury prevention OR health promotion*). Further articles were sourced via Google Scholar using search terms: *ambassador; role of a program ambassador; champion health prevention; and ambassadors as advocates*. Reference lists of included articles were hand searched for other relevant references. In total n=59 articles were located. Article titles and abstracts were examined for appropriateness. Nineteen articles were included for final review. Endnote (version 9) was used for managing the articles.

Grey literature was searched using Google. Search terms were: *injury prevention, media, ambassador, health ambassador program, positive speakers and champions*. Program descriptions, organisation descriptions, type of ambassador program, location, updates, keywords, were used to identify relevant programs. The number of search results received were recorded and the first 50 results were refined to 12-15 results for each concept. A set of exclusion criteria was created and used whilst refining the searches.

Grey literature was excluded if it:

- Was not from Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, Canada, or the United States of America
- If the program was not an ambassador, champion, or lay health advisor program
- If the program did not incorporate peer, youth, community, or political ambassadors
- If the program did not incorporate personal experience, for example, the program needed to include ambassadors who had experienced the illness or situation or known someone who had

Results for all included literature were extracted into an Microsoft excel spreadsheet with headings including article title, author(s), date, country of origin, link to article, type of ambassador/program, study populations and sample size, aims/purpose, methodology, key information (including strengths and weaknesses), health issue, and abbreviations. For grey literature relevant information was extracted with headings including name of website/program, author(s), date published, country of origin, website link, description of program, target group, type of ambassador program, strengths, weaknesses, other important information, evaluated or not, health issue, and abbreviations.

ORGANISATION SPECIFIC CASE STUDIES

Of the Ambassador Programs identified in the grey literature search, four were identified as having particular relevance to the Keep Watch Ambassador program. They involved lay person advocates, included a media component to the ambassador role and included real life stories. Case studies of these ambassador programs include a description of the program and points of interest or learnings from the program.

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AUDIT OF RLSSWA WEBSITE

An audit of the RLSSWA Ambassador Program website pages was conducted in December 2020. The audit included:

- A review of the drowning event (child's name, age, gender, date of event, location, a summary of details, a summary of outcomes and health status and other outcomes); and
- A content analysis (word count, inclusion of video, photos, quotes and/or links, the main message of the Ambassador's story).

Note: In February 2021, a new Ambassador was added to the Program, her story was subsequently included in the audit.

SUMMARY OF MEDIA MONITORS

For the past five years, RLSSWA has collated media monitors. For this review, media monitor data were synthesised into a tabular summary which included: type of media (radio, TV, newspaper, online); topics addressed (child skills, parental responsibility, regional or rural, pool fencing, pool alarms, portable pools, statistics); and use of Ambassadors (total and by individual) in the media coverage.

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