Twitter Thread by writer sam



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Some thoughts on this: Firstly, it might be personal preference, but I am not keen on this kind of campaign as I feel like it trivialises cancer. Sometimes the serious message gets lost because people are sharing pics of cats or whatever and the important context is gone.

> It\u2019s #CervicalCancerPreventionWeek \U0001f499
>
> Here\u2019s how you can help to raise awareness:
> \U0001f431 Share an image of the cat that best reflects your undercarriage/flower/bits (technical term vulva!) current look.
> #\u20e3Use the Hashtag #myCat.
> \U0001f46dTell and tag your friends to let them know. pic.twitter.com/8aHf96ynjT
>
> — myGP (@myGPapp) January 18, 2021

More importantly, the statistic being used in the campaign is misleading. It says 57% of women put off cervical screening if they can't get waxed. But on further investigation, that's not accurate.

The page here goes on to say "57% of women who regularly have their pubic hair professionally removed would put off attending their cervical screening appointment if they hadn’t been able to visit a beauty salon." https://t.co/7W3k4c4J1C

So the 57% represents a concern not across the whole population of women, but only those who regularly get waxed. So how big of an issue is this across the whole population? And what else is stopping people getting smears?

I think campaigns for cancer screening are really tricky because there is so much nuance that often doesn't fit into a catchy headline or hashtag. It's certainly not easy and is part of a bigger conversation.

Some things that would have encouraged me to get a smear test, back when I needed them (or some things that help me feel more comfortable about going to medical appointments):

1. Knowing exactly what happens/how it works/whether it's painful or uncomfortable or what

2. Whether you get or can ask for a female nurse
3. Knowing that if anything is found, it may be easily treated. And that if it's uncomfortable for a few minutes, it'll be well worth it to either solve any problems or to get that great feeling of relief that everything's okay.

I think it could help people to think about the root of their fear or embarrassment and encourage them to find ways to address those fears with the aim of feeling more comfortable - e.g. by asking questions about what to expect.

I think validating people's fears also goes a long way. At my first smear test I said I was nervous and the nurse said "why are you nervous? I've done this seven times today." Though it may be helpful to know how routine the procedure is, I felt dismissed rather than listened to.

Like, I don't care how many times you've done this procedure today - I'm not worried about you being nervous!

But knowing how many people also feel nervous - but go anyway, and come out feeling glad they did it and that it wasn't that bad - maybe that could be encouraging.

But getting people to share pics of cats... reminds me of those things on Facebook where people inbox each other the colour of their handbags and that's supposed to raise awareness but nobody actually explains the thing they're sharing awareness of.

Going off on a tangent slightly, but also, campaigns that seem to trivialise cancer, - I'm not into it. Although, some people seem to be. Maybe it makes things seem more accessible instead of scary. Because cancer is scary and people don't want to think about it. I get that.

Anyway, these are all just musings of a three-time cancer survivor. Listen to us sometimes; we occasionally have some insights about these things.