Zelnorm: “Tummies”

**Brand Name:** Zelnorm  
**Product Type or Description:** Prescription Medication for IBS with Constipation  
**Category for this Entry:** Health Aids/Prescription Products  
**Campaign Title:** “Tummies”  
**Agency:** Deutsch, Inc.  
**Client:** Novartis Pharmaceuticals Corporation

**Marketing Challenge**

How can you convince sufferers to seek treatment with a new drug if they don’t understand the problem it can solve?

This was one of the key consumer challenges faced by Novartis in establishing prescription Zelnorm. Irritable Bowel Syndrome with Constipation is a digestive condition, with significantly greater prevalence in women. Extensive qualitative research revealed that most sufferers find the hallmark symptoms, abdominal pain/discomfort, bloating and constipation, embarrassing to discuss. And consequently, they feel forced to suffer in silence. Many experience symptoms for years without ever finding relief or learning the underlying cause. They become resigned to self-medicating using over-the-counter laxatives or fiber and by modifying diet/lifestyle. Unfortunately, none of these treatments effectively relieve the multiple symptoms of IBS-C, nor do they address the underlying cause.

In-depth interviews with doctors revealed that IBS-C is also a complex condition at the physician level. Many are skeptical as to whether the condition really exists, because there is no simple test to identify it. They often mistakenly believe that symptoms are diet or stress-related, and are self-imposed as a result of being “overly emotional” and “stressed out.” Sadly, this misconception has led many doctors to dismiss legitimate IBS-C patients.

Sufferers’ experience with symptoms, failed treatments and their doctors’ dismissive responses had created multiple barriers to treatment. To be successful, Zelnorm’s first direct-to-consumer campaign had to connect with sufferers on both rational and emotional levels: it needed to educate consumers about the symptoms of IBS-C and its underlying cause as well as establish Zelnorm as a unique treatment that really works. It also needed to give women the right language to articulate their symptoms and instill a sense of hope in order to motivate them to go back to their doctors and request Zelnorm.
Campaign Objectives

- Drive IBS-C sufferers into physicians’ offices to request Zelnorm
- Generate above-norm awareness of Zelnorm among sufferers
- Educate sufferers about Zelnorm’s unique mechanism of action that provides symptom relief

Target Audience

Women 25-54 who have spent many years suffering from the recurring symptoms of IBS-C

The majority of these women are unaware of what is causing their multiple symptoms, as they have not been diagnosed or sought medical care. Some have not even heard of Irritable Bowel Syndrome. Whether or not they are diagnosed, these women have struggled to find a successful means of dealing with the ongoing discomfort, anxiety and embarrassment caused by their symptoms. For those who have received a medical diagnosis, this hasn’t necessarily helped, since many available treatments, such as fiber or laxatives, can exacerbate symptoms and won’t provide complete relief of all symptoms. The result is a cycle of frustration and disappointment, leading to feelings of resignation.

Creative Strategy

Educate consumers that Zelnorm can help them feel better by relieving the “ABCs” of IBS-C.

The “Tummies” campaign was launched in August 2003. It featured iconic visuals of women’s stomachs that connected with the target by immediately associating Zelnorm with the digestive area. The featured tummies were used to tell a story with a simple message flow: Educate sufferers about IBS-C through self-identification of the hallmark “ABC” symptoms (abdominal pain/discomfort, bloating and constipation), introduce Zelnorm and its benefits and differentiate the brand through its unique mechanism of action (MOA). The combination of these messages provided the strongest likelihood that sufferers would be motivated to seek treatment with Zelnorm.

By featuring language that captured the experience of IBS-C, the tummies served as arresting billboards that literally “spoke” to women in a real empathetic voice, communicating to sufferers from the precise area where they experience their symptoms. A variety of different women’s tummies were featured to engage a range of sufferers across ethnicities, ages, shapes and sizes.

Media Strategy

An integrated, multi-vehicle educational campaign was developed for Zelnorm to reach IBS-C sufferers at the different stages of their treatment decision cycle—from awareness to information seeking to consideration to speaking with their doctor about a prescription. Because Zelnorm’s consumer awareness was extremely low, television drove the media plan to build broad, rapid awareness and educate sufferers about the ABC’s of IBS-C. Introductory DTC television campaign spending was competitive with other introductory DTC launches. Media weight levels were generally above OTC fiber/laxative brands due to the need to break through competitive clutter and introduce Zelnorm.

Each vehicle in the media plan was utilized for its unique ability to achieve our communication goals: self-identification, education, brand/condition awareness and motivation to seek treatment with Zelnorm.

Media

- Television
- Consumer Magazine
- Direct Mail
• Interactive/Online
• Other: In Physician Office/In-Store

Total Media Expenditures:
• $20 million and over

Other Communication Programs

Other programs in the Zelnorm DTC communication plan included the following: Direct – Patient Education/Information Fulfillment and Follow-up Communications: To engage the target on a one-to-one basis as they begin to seek out more information about treating the ABC’s of IBS-C at the source of the problem. DRTV: To encourage consumers to seek deeper information and to speak with their doctor about Zelnorm. In-Store/Pharmacy Programs: To reach competitive OTC users at the point of purchase with messages that reinforces Zelnorm’s unique point of difference. Physician Office Waiting Room and Exam Room Materials: To reinforce our message at the critical point when the target is talking to their doctor.

Evidence of Results

The Zelnorm “Tummies” DTC campaign greatly exceeded projections in every key measure:

“Tummies” proved successful at motivating IBS-C sufferers to seek treatment with Zelnorm:

• Reported total prescriptions increased by 90% in the nine months following the DTC launch and new prescriptions increased by 64% (Source: IMS)

• One year post-DTC launch, 390,000 new patients were prescribed Zelnorm (Source: Novartis internal data)

• At nine months following the launch, 50% of respondents (top 2 box) said the Tummies advertising made them want to ask their doctor about Zelnorm (Source: Millward Brown)

“Tummies” generated broad, rapid awareness of Zelnorm among sufferer groups:

• After just nine months following DTC launch, total ad recognition had grown to nearly 9 out of 10 consumers, and Zelnorm’s brand awareness had increased from 5% to 53%, exceeding DTC new brand norms by more than 50% (Source: Millward Brown)

“Tummies” educated consumers about Zelnorm’s unique MOA and ability to relieve multiple symptoms:

• Awareness that Zelnorm works at the source to fix the problem grew from 52% to 71% in nine months, and belief that only Zelnorm helps your GI tract function more normally increased from 55% to 69% over the same time period (Source: Millward Brown)