

## Current research into health communication in South Africa: The power of fotonovelas and vignettes

The SU Language Centre is hosting a health communication research talk during which three dynamic researchers will share what they are busy with. Join the event in person or online.

**Venue:** Kleine Bosch Seminar room (44 Banhoek Rd, Stellenbosch)

**Date:** Friday 4 November 2022

**Time:** 12:00 to 13:30, refreshments available

**RSVP:** By 1 November to Susan, [slotz@sun.ac.za](mailto:slotz@sun.ac.za); also email her for the link to attend online.

More on the presentations and the speakers:

### Investigating the effects of fotonovelas on type 2 diabetes

– by Dr [Burt Davis](#) (Senior lecturer, Africa Centre for HIV/Aids Management, SU) and Prof [Carel Jansen](#) (Senior lecturer, Africa Centre for HIV/Aids Management, SU)

Health communication researchers Burt Davis and Carel Jansen will share some details about their new study in which they test the effectiveness of a 'fotonovela', or photo novel, to help communicate preventative health information about type 2 diabetes to the general public. They are particularly interested in investigating how effective fotonovelas are to convey information and messages to people from different age groups about diabetes. Recent research suggests that age similarity of the reader to that of the protagonist in a narrative such as a fotonovela can play an important role in how a message is received.

The effects of three message conditions, namely (a) a fotonovela with an older protagonist, (b) a fotonovela with a younger protagonist, and (c) a no-message control condition will be compared on selected variables across an older (25–40 years) and a younger (50–60+) age group. Participants may choose in which language to read the photonovela assigned to them: Afrikaans, English or isiXhosa.



*A picture from one of the fotonovelas in this study.*

Societal partners with whom the researchers have worked on past community intervention projects are currently actively recruiting/mobilising participants and organising community-based interventions for this purpose in Grabouw, Gugulethu, Mitchells Plain and Calvinia.

First results are expected at the end of November 2022 when data collection should be completed.

## Using vignettes to provoke mixed gender cancer prevention discussions among university students

– by Prof [Elizabeth Lubinga](#) (HOD, Department of Strategic Communication, University of Johannesburg)

Cancer prevention face-to-face conversations, particularly about self-examination when held between male and female youths, can be complex. Yet, tailored, audience-specific communication strategies targeting the youth are necessary for primary cancer prevention to shape behaviour that could attenuate the spread of leading cancers.

A qualitative study investigated the potential effectiveness of using mixed-gender face-to-face conversations among university students as a primary prevention communication strategy that could lead to cancer prevention behaviour and promote early detection. Two vignettes were constructed to provoke mixed-gender conversations about cancer prevention between 21 male and female South African university students.



One of the two vignettes used in this study.

The vignettes provoked conversations among participants about self-examination for cancer prevention as well as the types of tests required for common cancers such as breast cancer, prostate cancer and cervical cancer. Questions about the self-examination of private parts led to open discussions between the two genders. The discussions further revealed that there was a lack of knowledge about self-examination as part of primary cancer prevention.

This study provides insight into the potential of using peer-to-peer, face-to-face discussions between mixed genders as a primary prevention communication strategy by health promotion organisations in South Africa and other countries.