Tick Free NH Evaluation

In the spring of 2016, the University of New Hampshire (UNH) Survey Center included ten questions on its spring 2016 Granite State Poll for JSI Research and Training Institute, Inc. (JSI) regarding awareness and practices on Lyme disease prevention. Some of these questions were replicated from a Granite State Poll taken in the Summer of 2008. According to those statewide survey results, the top three reasons people report for not checking for ticks or applying insect repellent are that they:

1. “Forgot or didn’t think to check for ticks,”
2. “Forgot to bring repellent,” and
3. “Didn’t perceive there was a reason to do the check.”

This survey of five hundred two (502) NH adults was conducted by telephone between April 18 and May 3, 2016. The margin of sampling error for the survey is +/- 4.4%.

JSI developed the following Goals and Objectives for the campaign;

Goal 1: Prevent tick encounters by protecting with repellent and clothing
   Objective 1.1: By October 2017 to increase NH residents who report using insect repellent by ≥ 2 percentage points.
   Objective 1.2: By October 2017 to increase NH residents who report using tucking their pants into their socks or wearing protective clothing by ≥ 2 percentage points.

Goal 2: Inspect for ticks every time with tick checks for kids and pets
   Objective 2.1: By October 2017 to increase NH residents who report checking their children and pets for “ticks every time” or “most times” by ≥ 2 percentage points.

Goal 3: Remove any tick found properly & right away
   Objective 3.1: By October 2017 to increase NH residents who report correct tick removal methods by ≥ 2 percentage points.

The University of New Hampshire included seven questions on its Fall 2016 Granite State Poll for JSI about awareness and practices regarding Lyme disease and ticks. Most of these questions were replicated from a Granite State Poll taken in the Spring of 2016; media campaign recall questions were added. A survey of five hundred and seventy-seven (577) New Hampshire adults was conducted by telephone between October 3 and October 9, 2016. The margin of sampling error for the survey is +/- 4.4%

• A majority (62%) of respondents believe they are at a high (27%) or moderate (35%) risk of becoming infected with Lyme disease. Thirty-seven percent believe they are at a low (31%) risk or no risk at all (6%). These assessments remain very similar to those made in the Spring of 2016.
• Respondents’ preferred methods for removing ticks has remained largely the same as in the Spring of 2016. Removing a tick with one’s fingers remains the most common method (31%), followed by pulling the tick straight out with tweezers (15%) and twisting the tick out with tweezers (14%).
• The number of respondents who say they always check their body for ticks after being in a wooded, grassy or brushy area grew only slightly from Spring 2016 (figure 3b), but is substantially greater than in Summer 2008. The number of respondents who report never checking their body for ticks after going to such areas grew slightly from Spring 2016 but remains lower than in Summer 2008.
• More than a quarter of respondents (26%) say they always apply insect repellent on their body or their clothes when in wooded, grassy or brushy areas. Nearly half (41%) do so sometimes, while 27% report never applying insect repellent. The proportion of respondents who say they never use insect repellent has grown from 18% in the Summer of 2008 to 27%. The reason for this is unknown.

• A third of respondents (32%) say they always wear protective clothing such as long pants tucked into socks, sneakers, a long sleeve shirt, or light colored clothing when in wooded, grassy or brushy areas. Nearly half (47%) do so sometimes, while 14% report never wearing such protective clothing. A greater proportion of respondents than in Spring 2016 report sometimes or never wearing protective clothing.

• Respondents were most likely to have seen Lyme disease prevention messaging in the last six months via television (22%). Fewer respondents saw messaging via flyers (11%) at a doctor or vet's office (11%), newspapers (9%), social media (7%), a website (7%), or radio (4%).

• Older people are more likely to have seen some kind of Lyme disease prevention messaging, while younger people are less likely to have seen any.

• After seeing Lyme disease prevention messaging, respondents most commonly protected themselves by wearing protective clothing (43%), checking themselves for ticks (42%), and using insect repellent (37%).

• Twenty-three percent of those who saw Lyme disease prevention messaging did not take any steps or any additional steps to protect themselves.

Television had the best reach and advertisement recall, however, older adults are more likely to have viewed the statewide news station than younger adults, and remembered the ads. Message recall was good; seventy-seven percent of those who saw Lyme disease prevention messaging took appropriate steps/additional steps to protect themselves from tick bites. There may be some reluctance still to use insect repellent. People with more than one child are more aware of preventing tick bite methods.

• Women are more likely than others to have used insect repellent after seeing Lyme disease prevention messaging. Those with a high school education or less, Manchester Area residents, and men are less likely to have done so.

• Those who have completed postgraduate work and those who read the Boston Globe are more likely than others to have worn protective clothing after seeing Lyme disease prevention messaging. Those with a high school education or less, those with one child in their household, and those with a technical school/some college education are less likely to have done so.

We anticipate that the grass-roots outreach at recreational outdoor venues and through schools and camps will have an increased reach to some of the younger residents of New Hampshire; outreach was done to over 1,500 locations. Over 27,000 materials have been distributed and ordered throughout New Hampshire at this time, the majority to schools (K-4) and daycare centers.
Social Media Metrics:

Since the launch of the website (TickFreeNH.org), less than a year ago, there have been over 8,000 pageviews (6,200 unique pageviews), with an average of over two minutes on the site. The site is designed for easy content access on the homepage to enable those on the trail to access information without having to navigate much and retains the majority of the traffic, however the sharable resources page (the area where people can order materials) receives about 7% of traffic. Website traffic for www.TickFreeNH.org remained steady from Spring into the Fall (2016); primary drivers were through web, social and streaming. Social media activity was reduced in September as tick season began to wind down and paid media ran through the end of October. Fifty-five percent of website visitors were from a mobile or tablet device vs desktop, however desktop viewers spend on average almost a minute more on pages.

Lessons Learned:

Tick Free NH and the materials created for the campaign are in high demand. The balance between providing materials and raising awareness and being able to budget for the demand and shipping of those materials without having a steady income from donations and sponsorships is a precarious line, one that we are still learning to stay on the correct side of. Grass-roots engagement is key for materials development and dissemination while sponsorships are difficult to forge; this was not the primary focus for part one of the campaign, if it had happened simultaneously we would have more sustainable funding (presumably) now to purchase more materials. While key informant interviews had told us that school curriculum was hard to get into, the demand for materials from schools has been astounding. Educating child care centers on what types of policy they can develop for tick removal is still something we are developing; in year two of funding we hope to be able to evaluate an increase in tick policies as well as survey to anticipate the demand for materials ahead of time, before production and outreach to sponsors. We are just now fostering relationships with potential brand ambassadors (avid trail hikers who post trail conditions or who are early adaptors/influencers), again, given more start time and staff, it would have been advantageous to develop those relationships simultaneously as well.

As we move into year two, with the hopes of receiving more funding, we hope to focus more on sponsorships and brand recognition in order to lay groundwork for a better sustainability plan for the program as well as find funding to re-run the PSA. Additionally, without the donated time of dedicated JSI staff, the project would not have been able to grow so robustly. In the future JSI hopes to be able to fund the work of staff at better levels.