

How to Communicate Oral Health Information: Working with the Media to Increase Oral Health Awareness

Why We Need to Partner with Mass Media

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***The National Call to Action to Promote Oral Health
stated that the #1 Action to be taken was to
change perceptions of oral health among:***

- the public at large
- policy makers
- health providers



Change Public Perceptions

- Enhance oral health literacy
- Develop messages that are culturally sensitive and linguistically competent
- Enhance knowledge of the value of regular, professional oral health care
- Increase the understanding of how the signs and symptoms of oral infections can indicate general health status and act as markers for other diseases

One of the best ways to communicate to large numbers of people from all walks of life is through the use of all forms of mass media



Daily we are bombarded with new information about some health matter in newspapers, on TV, radio or the Internet. Yet, very, very little of the health content is about oral and craniofacial diseases and conditions



What is more difficult to understand is that essentially we know how to prevent or control most oral diseases. Yet, this information gets little notice by mass media



**The Surgeon General's
Report: Oral Health in
America was released in 2000**

Oral/dental health has been mentioned in many of the previously published SG reports. But, the 2000 report was the only one focused on oral health

We conducted a study to compare the newspaper and wire coverage provided on oral health one year before the release of Oral Health in America and 18 months after its release

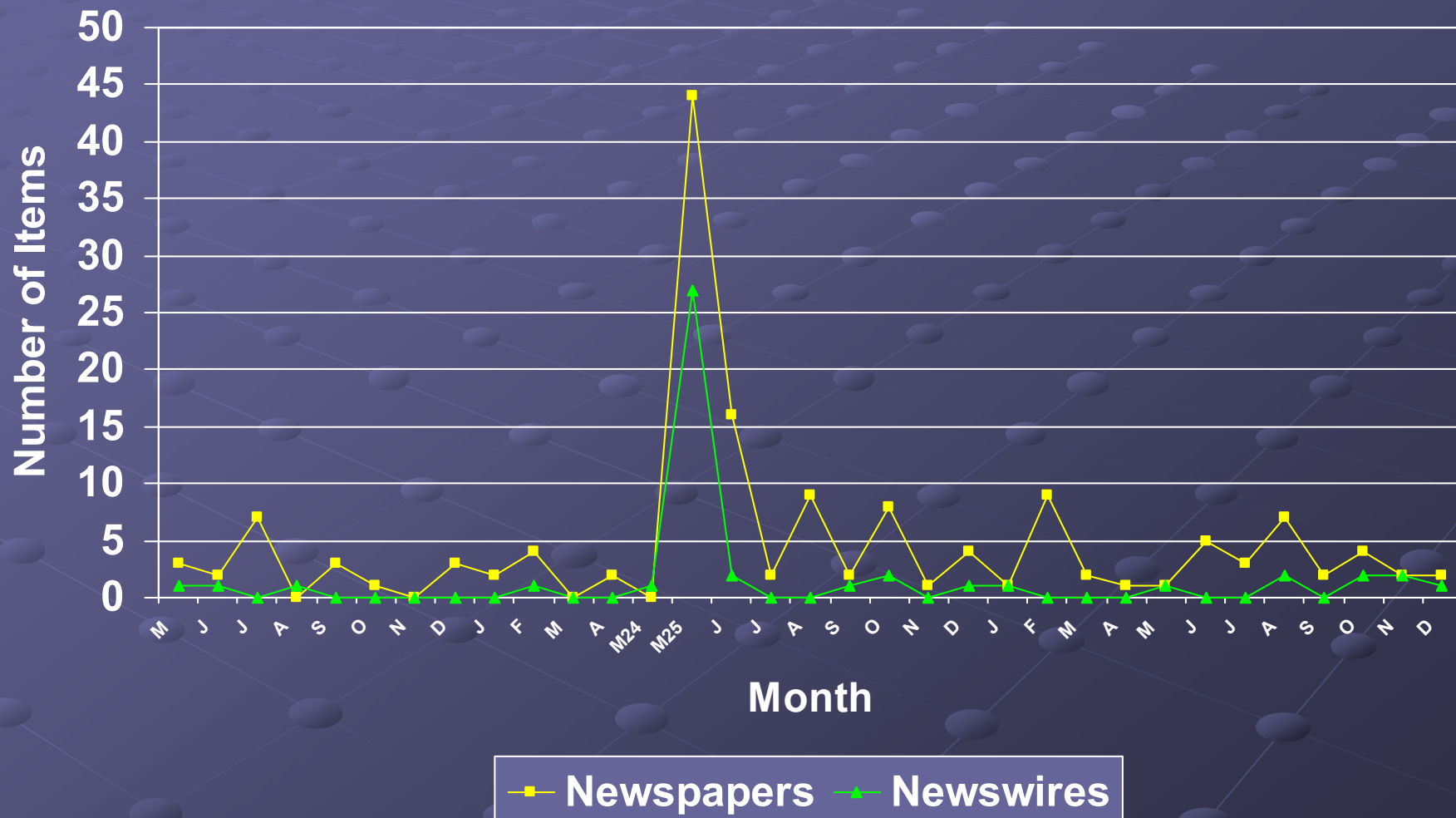
Data Bases Used

- *Dialog* supplied sources from 54 major city's circulating newspapers [Washington Post, LA Times, Chicago Tribune, NYT, etc]
- *Nexis.com* provided articles from regional and national newspapers, Wire Service Stories and AP items.

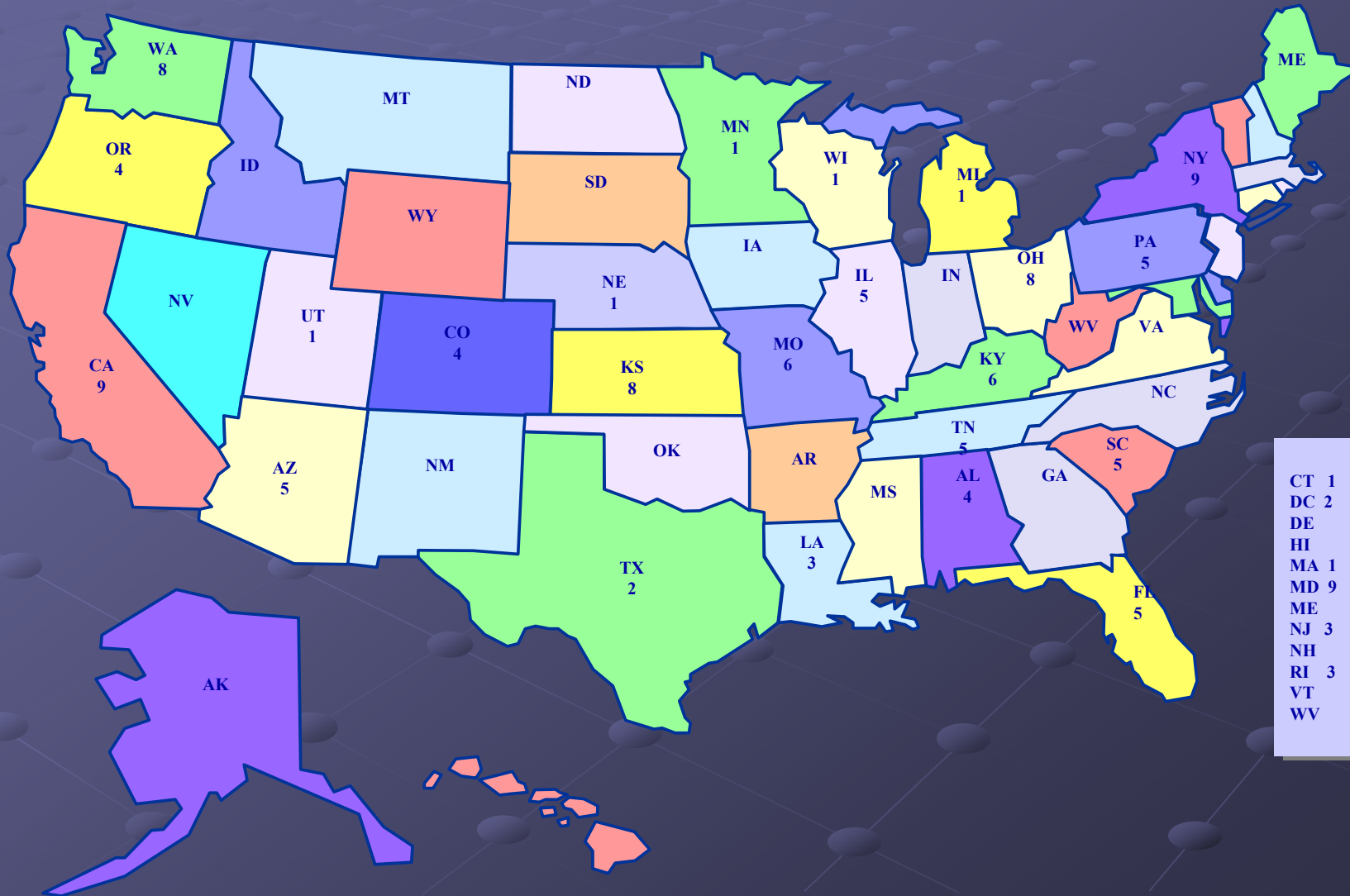
Results: 197 items were analyzed for their content

<u>News wires</u>		<u>Newspapers</u>	
Before	After	Before	After
5	27	42	123

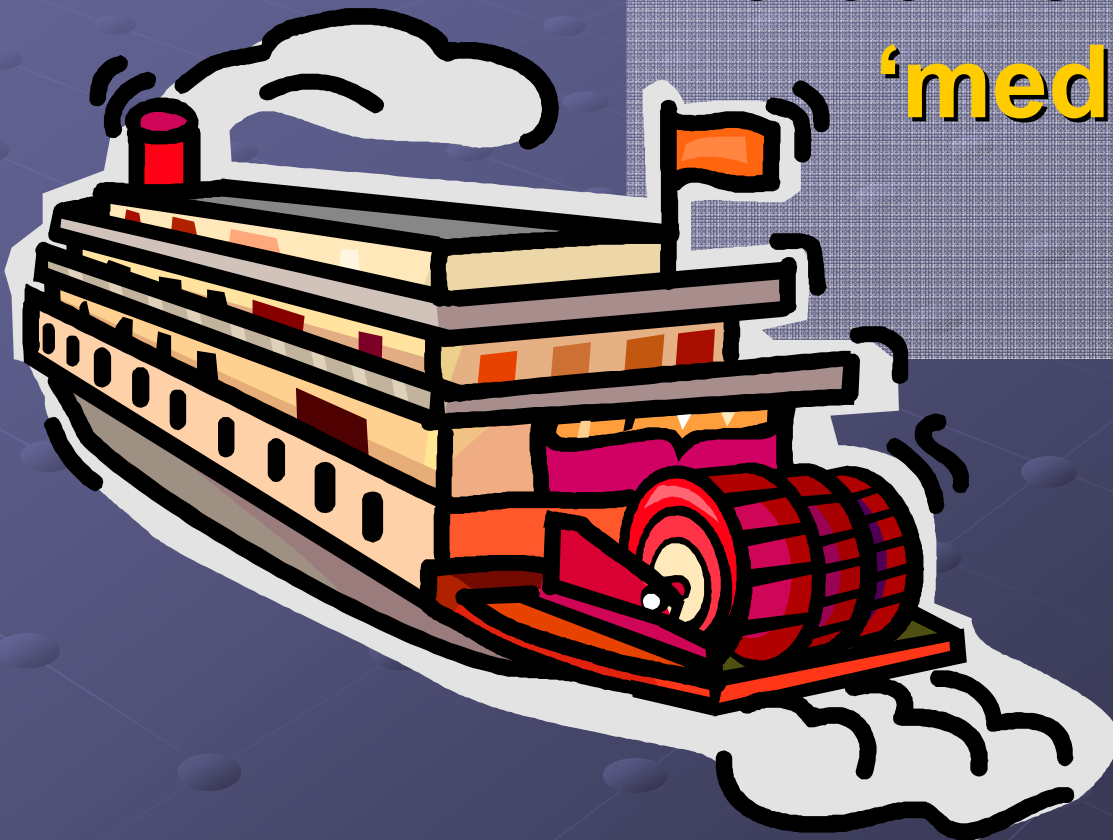
Mass Media Coverage of Oral Health and the Surgeon General's Report of Oral Health by Month, 1999-2001



Mass Media Coverage After the Release of the Surgeon General's Report on Oral Health



The results of this study demonstrate that we missed the 'media boat'.



We need to make extensive effort to entice those who work in mass media to include oral health

Acknowledgement



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