

AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE IN **PUBLIC RELATIONS 2020**



Best Healthcare Campaign



Recently retired sports broadcaster and Irish Heart Foundation Ambassador Michael Lyster, who lives with heart failure pictured at the launch of 'Don't ignore the signs of heart failure' campaign in the Botanic Gardens. Photo by Marc O'Sullivan.

Campaign

Don't Ignore The Signs of Heart Failure

Description of Campaign

With a brief to empower people to act for their health, the Don't Ignore the Signs of Heart Failure campaign for the Irish Heart Foundation supported by Novartis, was impossible to ignore. Implemented by Edelman with a sharp focus on a dual-audience approach, this campaign exceeded all set targets.



Edelman

Public Relations Consultant

Edelman



NOVARTIS

Client

Irish Heart Foundation (supported by Novartis)

Background to the Campaign

Despite affecting more than 90,000 people in Ireland, heart failure is often ignored and misunderstood. One of the main reasons is that the symptoms, which include fatigue, swollen ankles, and shortness of breath, are often mistaken for other conditions, or seen as by-products of the ageing process. People tend to live with the symptoms for a long time, ignoring them until they can no longer put off a visit to the doctor.

Edelman was appointed by the Irish Heart Foundation to run a communications campaign around its *Don't Ignore the Signs of Heart Failure* message, supported by Novartis.

On appointment, our first step was to check what Irish people really knew about heart failure. We worked with a local research agency to ascertain people's knowledge of the condition and its warning signs. As suspected, misunderstandings about heart failure were widespread:

- 43% incorrectly confused the condition with a cardiac arrest.

- 61% were unaware that swollen ankles are one of the key warning signs.
- 34% did not identify fatigue as a symptom.

Recognising that people were very confused about the symptoms – and that there was a lack of understanding about what heart failure meant – became central to how we directed and developed our 2019 campaign messaging.

Our research had reinforced the importance of educating the audience to identify the symptoms and motivate action. We were also able to apply learnings from previous heart failure awareness campaigns, whilst building in practical actions for the public to take.

Our challenge was to move beyond awareness, adding engagement, to motivate action. It was vital to reach two distinct audiences: those in the 65+ at-risk age group and those already diagnosed with heart failure.

For those at risk of developing heart failure, our message and call to action was to seek early intervention and a potential early diagnosis. Those already diagnosed were encouraged to be more proactive in their approach to managing the condition.

Statement of Objectives

For Edelman, the driving objective was clear: make heart failure impossible to ignore. With two clear target audiences identified, we agreed twin objectives for the campaign:

Objective 1: Increase Traffic to The Irish Heart Foundation Online Symptom Checker

This priority would help drive early diagnosis of heart failure for those most at risk.

With early intervention being critical for those experiencing the symptoms of heart failure, we needed to highlight the warning signs of heart failure and overcome resistance to (or fear of) visiting a GP.

Our aim, therefore, was to motivate people at risk to use the Irish Heart Foundation's online symptom checker tool. This would allow the public to self-assess whilst logging and reporting their symptoms. These results could then be downloaded and taken to a GP, should the individual wish – or feel impelled – to further discuss their condition and concerns.

Objective 2: Drive Attendance at Regional Events

This goal applied to people already living with heart failure, educating them on how to best manage their condition.

This part of the campaign entailed the Irish Heart Foundation hosting six regional patient information evenings across the country, for those living with a heart condition. It was important that our outreach programme urged those already diagnosed with heart failure to attend these meetings, along with members of their support group (such as family, friends, and carers).

We wanted to empower patients to take an active role in self-management of their condition. This emphasis on taking control and action required an initial need to understand options, so the information evenings gave attendees the chance to ask local experts for information and guidance, whilst raising questions and concerns.

Communication objectives

Alongside these strategic goals, the success of the campaign would be judged by specific KPIs:

- **Attendance:** 725 attendees across the six regional events.
- **Interactions:** 5,000 uses of the Symptom Checker.
- **Downloads:** 1,500 downloaded Symptom Checker results.
- **Reach:** 500,000 earned campaign reach.

We would measure success in terms of Awareness raised, Actions taken by our target audience, and Attitudes changed.

Programme Planning and Strategy

The campaign was able to build on existing foundations: this was the third year running that the IHF had pursued a heart failure awareness campaign. To move from awareness to action, it was important to learn from what had been done before and build our strategy from there.

To understand what had resonated in previous campaigns, we consulted heart failure patients. The most important insight from this exercise was that people wanted to hear from 'someone like them', a real person who had experienced heart failure. This guided our patient-centric thinking – and communications approach.

Armed with this knowledge, we enlisted the help of retired sports broadcaster Michael Lyster, who lives with heart failure, to tell his diagnosis journey and emphasise the importance of not ignoring the signs. Michael's story was both powerful and relevant to many, since his heart failure symptoms were typical and his initial response to them was human – ignore them and hope they go away.

We asked Michael's wife Anne to share her story, as the person in Michael's life who eventually forced him to act and not ignore the symptoms anymore. As well as Michael and Anne, we worked with several heart failure patients in each of the regions visited by the heart failure events. Each added their own first-person testimonies, giving regional media the human-interest angle, they wanted to bring the subject to life. By staying true to our 'someone like them' messaging, we ensured messaging resonated with our target audiences and the media alike.

We also worked closely with creative agency Spaceship, who built an online symptom checker which sat on the Irish Heart Foundation's campaign website, www.knowyourheart.ie. All communications directed our audiences to learn more and check the symptoms, via the site. Visitors were greeted by Michael's welcoming face, the three main symptoms of heart failure, and directions to the built-in symptom checker. This had been designed to be simple and intuitive to use, acknowledging that an older audience might not be as computer literate as their younger counterparts.

Having input their responses to prompts, each user was invited to print out their personal report and take it to their GP. This would provide an invaluable start point for an informed and educated discussion, ensuring an early diagnosis if issues were indeed present.

To help provide similar support to those already diagnosed with heart failure, we worked with the Irish Heart Foundation to set up and promote six regional information evenings. Each event focused on ways to manage the condition. Locations were chosen based on areas of need and the existence of Irish Heart Foundation support groups.

Reaching our audiences

The campaign ran from April to November 2019 and involved three content/activation strands:

Earned Content

The campaign was officially unveiled through a national press release, announcing the results of the research, highlighting the symptoms of heart failure, urging the public to use the symptom checker and announcing the regional information evenings. The release was supported by a simple but direct photocall that centred on Michael and the symptoms of heart failure.

We secured national media coverage for Michael and Anne in outlets favoured by our target audience. Two examples – The first interview was on RTÉ Morning Ireland: this and subsequent conversations focused on Michael's diagnosis journey, the symptoms he experienced and his natural but misguided misattribution of symptoms to his busy lifestyle. To reach our at-risk group, Michael's wife Anne highlighted the consequences of ignoring the signs in the Irish Independent's Weekend magazine. Both Michael and Anne consistently encouraged the public to use the symptom checker online if they recognised any elements of Michael's story in their own experience.

In tandem, we arranged for local patient ambassadors and healthcare professionals specialising in heart failure to be interviewed regionally, echoing the same messages, and encouraging those living with the condition to attend the Irish Heart Foundation information evenings.

Digital content

To create a powerful digital presence, Michael and Anne agreed to let cameras into their home, creating an emotive connection to their story. Through a hero video, the Lysters shared their story of how ignoring the warning signs had almost cost Michael his life. The video was targeted at those experiencing similar symptoms but yet undiagnosed, recommending that they use the symptom checker – then act on it by visiting their GP. The video was shared across the Irish Heart Foundation's social platforms, resonating strongly with our target audience.

To support regional events digitally, we promoted assets created by Spaceship across the Irish Heart Foundation's social platforms. This helped us reach those already diagnosed with heart failure, encouraging attendance whilst helping them learn more about self-management of the condition.

Paid Content (traditional and digital)

The third strand to the campaign saw us pay to play, reaching our audience directly and amplifying our calls to action. We used national and regional advertising (radio and print) to promote the campaign and the information events to an older demographic, with a mix of social and programmatic advertising aimed at a slightly younger group, directing them to the symptom checker on the IHF website.

These three strands each put Michael Lyster at their heart of the campaign, ensuring a recognised, empathetic, and engaging human face unified everything we said and did. The other constant was highlighting practical action at every touchpoint, rather than simply conveying information. The goal was to promote engagement, at every opportunity.

Measurement

We had set out to measure success in terms of Awareness raised, Actions taken by our target audience, and Attitudes changed.

Awareness

- **Earned:** Total earned reach of 3,854,589. Achieved through a mix of top tier interviews for key spokespeople (Michael and Anne Lyster, IHF spokesperson), as well as media interest in the press release and launch photography. Regional approach involved local health care professional and patient ambassador interviews urging those living with heart failure to attend the information events.
- **Print/Broadcast Paid:** We reached a further 2,161,572 people through a mix of national and regional radio advertising, regional print advertising, and national advertorials.
- **Social Phase 1 CPM:** Set KPI: €1.90 | Actual: €1.59.
- **Social Phase 2 CPM:** Set KPI: €1.99 | Actual: €1.70.
- **Digital Display Advertising Phase 1:** Unique Reach: 446,128 | Impressions: 1,338,384 Frequency: 3.

Action

- **Attendance at Six Events:** Set KPI: 725 attendees | Actual: 900.
- **Interactions with Symptom Checker:** Set KPI: 5,000 | Actual: 17,112.
- **Downloads of Symptom Checker Results:** Set KPI: 1,500 | Actual: 7,262.
- **Digital Content:** The digital campaign drove 22,880 click-throughs to the symptom checker and registration for events.

Attitude

- **Digital Audience Sentiment:** Though not measured quantifiably, the feedback on social was overwhelmingly positive. Many people noted their gratitude to Michael and Anne for sharing their story – and to the Irish Heart Foundation for their work. Audience feedback suggested that their encounters with the campaign had changed their outlook and behaviour.

In short, Don't Ignore the Signs was an overwhelming success, not only in terms of meeting objectives and exceeding all set KPIs, but also in making a real and tangible difference to lives. It was critical in 2019 that we moved the audience from awareness to action, and the results show that this was achieved. Our proudest achievement is the number of downloaded reports (7,262) from the online symptom checker. If only a small proportion subsequently took these reports to their doctors, many lives will have been enhanced or saved signifying a phenomenal result.

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