

LOCKWOOD: Hello and welcome. You're listening to DotMilDocs, the Military Health System's official pod cast. I'm Elizabeth Lockwood, and it's Thursday, January 21, 2010. The Military Health System is recognizing Healthy Lifestyle Month. Maintaining a healthy lifestyle means staying fit throughout the year. Learn more at Health.mil/healthylifestyle. This week's episode is all about healthy lifestyles. Our guest is Chuck Watkins, Chief of Communications Research and Requirements at TRICARE Management Activity Office of Communications and Customer Service. Mr. Watkins oversees DOD's That Guy campaign, which aims to increase awareness of the problems associated with binge drinking. Mr. Watkins, welcome to DotMilDocs.

WATKINS: Thank you Elizabeth, I appreciate it.

LOCKWOOD: Can you start with just providing us some background information on the program you work with, and why it was introduced and when?

WATKINS: OK. This campaign's purpose is to reduce the incidents of binge drinking in the military, and especially in our target audiences, the active-duty junior enlisted. And the reason for that is that they have a higher incidence of binge drinking than either their older counterparts within the military or their peers in the civilian world. So – I'm sorry.

LOCKWOOD: No, it's fine. So OK, it focuses mainly on men then, and especially junior enlisted?

WATKINS: Well the term of the campaign is That Guy. But we realize that many young women drink as much. They can get into trouble with their drinking also. So we mean That Guy in kind of a generic sense to apply to both men and women.

LOCKWOOD: Sure. When was the campaign begun?

WATKINS: It started in the year 2006, and it was really precipitated by TMA, the TRICARE Management Activities health related behavior survey, in which – that's a survey that's been going on for about 30 years. And there was a worrisome upward trend that was occurring in the military that was worse than it was on the civilian community. Binge drinking in the civilian community was either flat lining or actually going down, and we were seeing the opposite. So our senior leadership in the Military Health System chartered us. They provided funding and asked us to use a slick kind of Madison Avenue marketing approach in the belief that that would appeal to the target audience. So we let contracts and did some research, and that's how we came up with the concept.

LOCKWOOD: OK. And I believe there was just recently another DOD health-related behavior survey. Was there enough time – did enough time pass that you can really see a trend difference in that survey?

WATKINS: Actually there is. I can go into detail on that. I think maybe we might want to talk about – can we talk about the research that we did that formulated the campaign first? And then we'll kind of end with the health related behavior survey, if that's OK.

LOCKWOOD: Absolutely. Lead us off.

WATKINS: Well, we did not want to use – we were under the impression that the typical health promotions campaign, where you emphasize that this is bad for you and you emphasize the health effects, that clearly wasn't working. And so we started with a kind of clean sheet paper. We recruited focus groups at Fort Bragg, Lejeune, Nellis, and San Diego, a total of eight different focus groups, and we met with the target audience. We recruited people that said they liked to party and got together with them for about 90 minutes and interviewed them about their perceptions.

The findings of the focus group was that this target audience over-estimates the usage of alcohol in the military. But they do perceive that the culture of the military endorses heavy drinking. They are not concerned about long-term effects of alcohol. They're not concerned about career impacts or – you know, the health facts are not meaningful. It's as if they're immortal, and you've probably heard that. You've probably heard that about young people. We did not feel that top down delivery was likely to be effective. And when you talk about an abstinence campaign, that's absolutely laughable, so that's not an approach that we wanted to use.

But we did find that they believed the social consequences were likely to resonate. And what we mean by that is that they don't want to lose control, they don't want to be embarrassed among their peers. And then one of the kind of “duh” results was we found that humor tracks and resonates very strongly in this audience. So that was the kind of the basis of the campaign. And then we have done three more waves of research as we developed the campaign.

I'm really pleased with the That Guy motto, I guess you'd call it, Don't Be That Guy. We've all seen That Guy. That guy starts the night as a normal guy. Then he has one too many, starts to get grabby, he's spilling drinks, slurring words. He becomes at the mercy of those around him. And it's not hard to become That Guy. You could become That Guy. And what the campaign is trying to do is say don't be That Guy.

LOCKWOOD: Right. OK. So the campaign kind of uses humor and a really slick looking Website to target junior enlisted warriors who kind of think that everyone around them is maybe drinking more than they actually are?

WATKINS: That's right.

LOCKWOOD: OK.

WATKINS: The Website launched in December of 2006. And we went into the field to four locations. Again, Pensacola, Fort Bragg, Pope Air Force Base, and Camp Lejeune, and did kind of a marketing blitz. We rented billboard space. We did branded promotional materials. So we were putting like bar coasters in bars in the community. We were running 30-second video public service announcements at the installation movie theaters. We partnered with radio stations in the market to air radio spots, and to record remote events. Web banners on advertising spaces. Then we followed up by doing focus groups at those pilot installations, after the campaign had deployed, to find out what worked and what didn't work.

LOCKWOOD: So what did those focus groups find?

WATKINS: Well as you can imagine, the humor was very much liked. We had some things that didn't work. We had a temporary tattoo that they thought was a little too juvenile. But we got a lot of ideas for additional materials. And the other thing is we needed to make this campaign turnkey for the installation to adopt it. Everybody is pretty heavily engaged and has a full-time job already. So this is just another tool. It's not a program, it's a campaign, and we tried to make it turnkey. So as a result of those interviews, we developed a toolkit. There's an online resource center at Thatguy.com/resources, where you can order the free materials. They're all centrally funded. And we just realized that although we don't want to have people going to a mandatory formation in order to hear about the campaign, we do need installation commanders and public affairs officers, and MWR to support the campaign in order to get the messaging in front of the target audience.

LOCKWOOD: OK. And you said the Website was www.thatguy.com?

WATKINS: That's right. And it's won quite a few awards, including the Webby, which is the big one in 2007.

LOCKWOOD: That's exciting.

WATKINS: It's won lots – the whole campaign has been very well received. Commanders love it. The target audience loves it. It's just a lot of fun. We've got playing cards. We kind of took the lead from the invasion of Iraq, the original one where they had playing cards with the top leadership of Saddam Hussein. So there's various reasons, a number of reasons, to not be That Guy. And it's just all edgy humor. We've had several general officers tell us, push the envelope of good taste. The target audience is into what maybe some of us would consider juvenile humor. Puking is a big deal. And urinating on yourself. Some of it's, you know, pretty edgy stuff considering that this is being done by DOD. But it does grab their attention and gets the messaging across that you don't want to be out of control.

LOCKWOOD: Right. And if it resonates with the target audience that's really the end goal.

WATKINS: Right. Exactly.

LOCKWOOD: So if you were on a military installation, other than those four that you had mentioned, what types of resources would you be able to access? Is the Website one of the main ones?

WATKINS: Right, it is. But there's cartoons that are available for downloading. We don't want our article in the base newspaper on the campaign. We'd rather have a cartoon in there. We have 24 cartoons. There's a booklet of jokes on reasons not to be That Guy. And there's lots of bar coasters, and all kinds of paraphernalia that you can circulate. There's posters to get around base on your installation.

LOCKWOOD: OK. That kind of stuff sounds like it fits in a lot more with the theme of the campaign, than just another article in the newspaper.

WATKINS: Exactly.

LOCKWOOD: We're going to take a quick break for the DotMilDocs Health Beat News and Information from the Military Health System. When we come back we'll talk to Mr. Watkins about the impact this program has had on the lives of service members.

WOMAN'S VOICE: DotMilDocs Health Beat.

CARLSON: The U.S. Naval ship Comfort deployed from Baltimore, Maryland on January 16th to provide medical support following the devastating earthquake that leveled the Haitian capital, Port-au-Prince, on January 12th. Medical staff onboard is mostly from National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland, and Portsmouth Naval Hospital in Portsmouth, Virginia. Other personnel flew in from Naval Medical Center San Diego in support of the humanitarian assistance and disaster relief efforts in Haiti. Deployed personnel include logistics specialists, doctors, nurses, hospital corpsmen and other support staff. The Chief of Navy Medicine, Navy Vice Admiral Adam M. Robinson, Jr. told the crew to prepare for a long deployment.

Due to advances in modern medicine, many wounded service members are returning to the fight or transitioning their experience to civilian employment. Naval Sea Systems Command wants them on board. Vice Admiral Kevin McCoy, Naval Sea Systems Commander, and Army Brigadier General Gary Cheek, Commander of the Army's Warrior Transitional Command, signed an agreement January 13th at Walter Reed Army Medical Center to increase opportunities for meaningful internships and employment with the Navy's largest system command.

Some new recruits at Fort Benning, Georgia are being greeted by a big surprise. Their drill sergeant, Staff Sergeant Luis Elias lost a hand in a training accident last summer. He has since been outfitted with an i-LIMB, a robotic prosthetic hand which can perform many of the same functions as his natural hand. Thanks to the i-LIMB, Elias can tie his shoe laces, play table tennis, and shake someone's hand. This type of prosthetic development keeps the military health system on the cutting edge of health care and treatment. All these stories and more are available at Health.mil. Logon and stay up to date. This has been your DotMilDocs Health Beat. For the Military Health System, I'm Russell Carlson.

LOCKWOOD: Welcome back to DotMilDocs. Today Chuck Watkins of TRICARE's Office of Communications and Customer Service is talking with us about the That Guy Campaign. So can you share with us some of the impact then that the campaign has had on service members?

WATKINS: OK, great. I'm going to talk about three forms of research. There is awareness. In other words, people have to be aware of your marketing campaign. We're trying to change their attitude and we're trying to change their behavior. We've been fortunate in having support of the Defense Manpower Data Center. They do very large surveys of – their Status Of Forces surveys. And we were able to insert some questions back in August of 2006. And at the time we saw that awareness of the That Guy Campaign was – this was just phantom awareness. Three percent said they had heard of it and recognized it as an anti-alcohol campaign. In 2007, that went up to 14%. In 2008, up to 29%. Results for 2009 are still pending, but back in August of 2008, as I said, nearly a third were aware of it. Awareness was highest in the Marine Corps with 38%, followed by the Air Force with 34%, and the Navy and Army were tied at 24%. That same survey, which we had over about two thousand respondents each year, we asked whether they appoint a designated driver when they drink. And the good news is the trends are headed in the right direction. That's gone from 56% to 60 to 63% in 2008. And then we're interested in whether they think it's important that I keep my drinking under control and act responsibly. And over the years that's headed in the right direction – 53% up to 57%.

LOCKWOOD: Are those the three phases? Awareness, designated drivers, and importance of maintaining control?

WATKINS: That's right.

LOCKWOOD: OK.

WATKINS: Absolutely.

LOCKWOOD: And in all of those, it sounds like you're going up with each year.

WATKINS: In the right direction.

LOCKWOOD: Perfect.

WATKINS: Kind of the gold standard for behavior, in other words, the number of people that are actually binge drinking, is the health related behaviors survey that's done by our survey division here at TRICARE Management Activity. And that's been ongoing for over 30 years. The results in 2008 compared to 2005 in our target audience showed a 5% drop in binge drinking from 51% in 2005 to 46% in 2008, and that's across the services. If you focus in on the younger sub-set of that, of the 17 to 20 year-olds, it had gone a 6% drop from 45 to 39%. People keep asking us, is the campaign working? And in 2008 we were able to do kind of an experiment within that health related behaviors survey. We compared the installations that had been actively engaged in deploying the campaign versus the ones that had not. And so we had 38% binge drinking among all treated installations, the ones that had deployed the campaign versus 49% in the installations that had been inactive. So that was an 11% reduction.

LOCKWOOD: That's quite large, yeah.

WATKINS: So it was a reduction of 10% in the Army, 10% in the Air Force, 4% in the Navy. Now ironically, the Marine Corps, although we had the greatest awareness, we didn't have controlled installations for the Marine Corps that had not deployed the campaign. We had deployed it at both Camp Pendleton and Lejeune, which are the super-large Marine Corps bases, so I don't have stats for that for the Marine Corps, but we think things are just getting better, and we're looking forward to the next iteration of both the Defense Manpower Data Center survey and the health-related behaviors survey.

LOCKWOOD: OK, so to kind of wrap up some, do you have anything coming up in the future, another campaign launch, or something else?

WATKINS: I think the most exciting thing is we've partnered with Comics on Duty – that's been going on for quite awhile, but along with AT&T, Navy Entertainment, and the Army MWR, they're visiting 99 installations across the country of both CONUS and I think it's Hawaii and Alaska. They kicked off this past Sunday at Key West Naval Air Station, and they're at NSA Athens tomorrow night. But this is a group of four comedians, they're incorporating That Guy jokes and messaging within their spiel, so –

LOCKWOOD: That's great.

WATKINS: – it sounds like a lot of fun. I'm looking forward to seeing them when they get to Washington.

LOCKWOOD: Definitely.

WATKINS: But we're providing the promotional campaign materials. So this'll run, as I said, from last Sunday through October of this year, and there's a schedule on – let's see, it's called Comedian – let's see – Comicsonduty.com. There's the schedule.

LOCKWOOD: OK, well that's really exciting. It sounds like you're starting to be able to get your messaging really synchronized with the talk that goes on around bases.

WATKINS: I think so. We're trying to create buzz, and one of the most rewarding things is sometimes we'll hear anecdotal reports of people that were traveling together and they were – maybe one of them was going out and they would say, well, don't be That Guy tonight. You know, it's kind of becoming part of the discussion.

LOCKWOOD: That's great. Well, Mr. Watkins, we want to thank you so much for stopping by DotMilDocs today.

WATKINS: Hey, I appreciate the interview, thank you.

LOCKWOOD: That does it for us this week on DotMilDocs. Join us next week when DotMilDocs returns with a visit from Ross Colquhoun, Firearms Training, Outdoor Field and Stream Program Manager at Walter Reed Army Medical Center. Mr. Colquhoun oversees the firearm training simulator at Walter Reed and also organizes trips for wounded warriors recovering from injuries varying from amputations to traumatic brain injuries.

Until then, see you on Health.mil.

ANNOUNCER: This program is a product of the office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs, Military Health System. DotMilDocs features the most relevant military health topics, important to you and your family. If you have questions or topics you'd like to see on an upcoming episode, send us an e-mail at DotMilDocs@tma.osd.mil. That's DotMilDocs@tma.osd.mil. Visit health.mil for more episodes.

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