

Travel Health Initiative

Partnering with Travel Agents in NYC


New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (NYCDOHMH)
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
Global Travel Epi Net (GTEN)
Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH)
Bronx-Lebanon Hospital (BLMC)



BACKGROUND

NYC Travelers Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR)

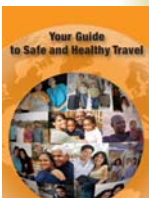
- Compared to other travelers, Travelers Visiting Friends and Relatives abroad (VFRs) have an increased risk for acquiring preventable diseases
- Malaria cases, NYC, 2004-2012
 - 67% reported VFR as the reason for travel
 - 75% traveled to West Africa
 - 16% reported taking chemoprophylaxis to prevent malaria
- Knowledge, Attitudes and Practice (KAP) surveys, NYC, 2003 and 2011
 - Confirmed high rate of VFR travel among malaria cases
 - Substantial knowledge gaps about malaria
 - 80% Purchased tickets through a travel agency



BACKGROUND

Prevention Efforts among NYC VFR Travelers

- Various outreach efforts & key-informants
 - Community partners essential
- 2004 Travel booklet developed and distributed at community events and houses of worship where potential VFR travelers might be reached.
- Unable to identify committed community partners for travel health messaging



BACKGROUND

Travel Health Initiative, NYC, 2013

- Global TravEpi Net (GTEN) develop online TRhIP Tool that links to real-time CDC health recommendations for travelers
 - Pilot test partnering with travel agents to utilize TRhIP tool with clients
- Potential Partners
 - NYC travel agencies serving VFR clients
- Intended Audience
 - VFR clients traveling to areas where preventable travel related illnesses are endemic.
- Outreach to Travel Agents would be the 1st initiative in the GTEN outreach program "Heading Home Healthy"



Methods

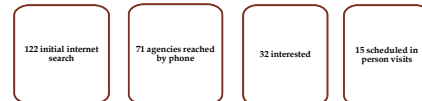
Engaging Partner Travel Agencies



- Internet Search to identify travel agencies in neighborhoods with high rates of travel associated malaria and typhoid.
- Phone Calls – limited reach
- In-person visits – better results
 - Survey to obtain general information about agency and interest in attending focus group/training event

Results

Identifying Travel Agencies



RESULTS

In-person Visits



- 13 Agencies
- Multi-service business
 - Tax preparation
 - Hair dressing
 - Insurance brokering
 - Funeral services
- Busy
 - Best times to reach-out is during slow season (September – October)
 - Simple messages
 - Frequent brief contact to stay on their radar

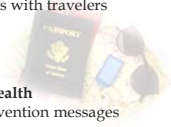


Results

Key Findings Travel Agent Survey, N=13



- Contact with clients
 - 12 (92%) conduct at least 2 in-person meetings with travelers
 - 11(84%) have email contact
 - 12 (92%) print documents and information
- Traveler health messaging
 - **Almost half (6) reported discussing travel health**
 - All believe clients would be interested in prevention messages
- Agent interests
 - Comfortable using web based tools such as TRHIP
 - Value recognition for their participation in travel health initiatives
 - Certificates
 - DOHMH notice on their website
 - Message about the business on the DOHMH website
 - 7 (53%) reported partnering with DOHMH could help their business



RESULTS

Key Findings from the Focus Group Training Event, N = 7



- One source for accurate and timely health information
- Business-friendly messaging
 - Does not discourage travel
 - No negative impact on profits
- Electronic tools
 - Online traveler-health application
 - Health booklets via PDF, links and mobile applications
 - Communication via email
- Multi-pronged approach to travelers health campaign
 - Outreach to wholesalers and agents at travel trade shows
 - Media campaign to promote the initiative widely
 - Certify agents as "travel health ambassadors"



Results

Interview with Travel Agent Champion



Public health background (MPH degree); passionate about travel and public health

Views health information as part of customer service/satisfaction. "Healthy happy travelers" means repeated customers and more referrals.

The Initiative enhances the brand: They saw Healthy Travel as Healthy Business

Strictly a travel agency; no additional businesses to distract focus off of services related to travel.

Owner willing to be a Travel Health Initiative advocate; willing to network and reach out to other agents with information on the program.

Conclusion



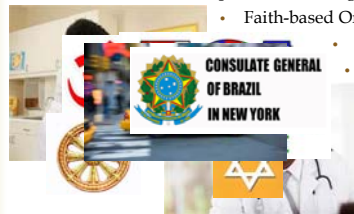
- Outreach efforts to agencies serving VFR travelers is very labor-intensive, however it was a fruitful effort.
 - Provided opportunity to partner with travel agencies
 - Improved our understanding of agencies that serve VFR clients
 - Built relationships that may be helpful during outbreaks (e.g. Ebola)
- Travel agents are a potential source for health messaging
 - They have face-to-face contact with VFR clients
- As requested by agents during the focus group, potential strategies for partnering with travel agents include:
 - Ongoing contact from health department
 - Media campaign
 - Formal recognition for efforts
- Travel agents with specific interests in health could serve as champions



Future Steps Heading Home Healthy



- Targeted outreach to community based medical providers serving VFR clients
 - Faith-based Organizations
 - ESL Classes
 - Embassies
 - Consular Services



Acknowledgements



BLMC/GTEN

Stefan Hagmann
Ana Maria Emeh

CDC

Stefanie Erskine
Emily Jentes

MGH/GTEN

Sara Marie Lammert
Regina LaRocque
Sowmya Rao
Edward Ryan

NYC DOHMH

Camille Adolphe
Kwadjo Antwi
Catherine Dentinger
Lucretia Jones
Ellen Lee
Kimberly Valcin
Stacey Wright-Woolcock



Travel Agencies

America Asia Travel Center
ATN Travel Services
Klassique Travels, Inc.
Marat Shkandin, Travel Consultant
Sabra Travel
Sunita Travel Agency

Heading Home Healthy/ TRhIP Tool



- Live demonstration of the TRhIP Tool
<http://gten.travel/trhip/trhip>

<http://www.headinghomehealthy.org/>

- Available in the Following Languages:
 - Arabic
 - Bengali
 - Chinese
 - English
 - French
 - Haitian Creole
 - Hindi
 - Spanish

