Advertising on the Internet
TIPS & LESSONS FROM CATIE’S ON-LINE SYPHILIS CAMPAIGN

OCTOBER 2011
CATIE is Canada’s source for up-to-date, unbiased information about HIV and hepatitis C. We connect people living with HIV or hepatitis C, at-risk communities, healthcare providers and community organizations with knowledge, resources and expertise to reduce transmission and improve quality of life.

CATIE would like to thank the following people for working with us to help produce this report.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Between December 2010 and March 2011, CATIE nationally promoted and distributed a syphilis awareness campaign, titled Attack of the Cursed Syphilis, which was originally developed by the AIDS Committee of Toronto (ACT) and further developed and distributed provincially by Ontario’s Gay Men’s Sexual Health Alliance. In conjunction with distributing campaign print materials, CATIE engaged four on-line advertising venues – facebook, Google, Squirt.org and gay.com – to drive gay, bisexual and other cis and trans men who have sex with men (MSM) to a page on CATIE’s Web site. The page provides information about transmission, symptoms, testing and treatment (www.catie.ca/eng/syphilis and www.catie.ca/fre/syphilis).

Throughout the duration of the campaign, the CATIE syphilis Web site received approximately 12,105 visits, driven by distributed print materials, on-line advertising and search-engine results. Using sophisticated analytics software, CATIE monitored how – and from where – people were driven to the CATIE syphilis site. The purpose of this document is to share CATIE’s experience with on-line advertising and report on the strengths, challenges and important considerations involved in reaching gay/bi/MSM men on the internet to communicate health information, expand the reach of social marketing campaigns, and potentially recruit participants for research and programming.

Based on an analysis and comparison of the traffic that each advertising venue drove to our site, a few key themes and lessons emerged:

**All on-line advertising venues are not equal**
Each form of on-line advertising we used varied significantly from the others: they reach different populations, require different formats (text-based, graphic-based or a combination), use different pricing structures, drive different volumes of traffic, and allow targeting of ads to specific segments of the population in different ways. Squirt.org drove the most traffic to CATIE’s Syphilis Web site, and it was also one of the more expensive options, costing approximately $1.26 per click advertising on Squirt.org, while facebook averaged about $0.54 per click (see Figure A, page 5). Another example is Google: while Google advertising drove lower numbers of people to our site, when our ads were shown in the Google search results they were about 10 times as likely to be clicked on. Understanding these nuances helps with spending advertising or research money more effectively and with driving the most possible traffic to a Web site. Venues also have different policies regarding what is considered acceptable as advertising content, such as sexually explicit materials and certain kinds of language.

**Different advertising models help reach different goals**
Certain advertising models, such as those often used by gay/bi social networking sites like gay.com and Squirt.org, work similarly to print newspapers – advertisers can purchase a defined advertising space on a Web page for a set amount of time. If an advertiser has a simple message that can

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**General Tips & Lessons for On-Line Advertising**

**Explore your options.** There are many different on-line advertising venues and options. If possible, research the various options to find ones that fit best.

**Know your population.** Try to get a sense of which Web sites gay/bi/MSM men in your community are visiting to help you decide where you want to advertise.

**Money does not equal success.** Numerous advertising models exist to achieve different goals cost efficiently (pay-per-click, purchasing banner space, etc.).

** Longer advertising campaigns are not necessarily better.** As campaigns go on they tend to become less effective; advertising in more places for a shorter amount of time and switching up the images & text during the campaign might get you better results.

**Track your campaign success.** Different advertising venues offer different ways of tracking the success of your campaign. Collecting and reviewing this information can be very helpful in understanding what did, and did not, work in your campaign. This will provide a base of understanding for future endeavours. Google analytics (www.Google.com/analytics) is an amazing, free service that makes monitoring your site traffic much simpler.
be conveyed in an ad, simply showing the ad to the target audience is sufficient and these venues are suitable. Models used by Facebook and Google, however, only ask advertisers to pay when a visitor actually clicks on the ads and goes on to visit the Web site being advertised. These options are cost-effective and generally successful, but may not reach the same populations that Squirt.org and gay.com would reach. Further, advertising on sites like Squirt.org and gay.com may suggest that your organization is gay- and sex-positive, potentially enhancing your relationship with your target audience and building brand recognition.

Reaching Populations
All of the sites CATIE advertised on allowed us to target ads to specific audiences in different ways – for instance, they are all able to geo-target ads in such a way that only those people in a defined region will be shown ads. Advertising through venues like Squirt.org and gay.com ensures that ads are being shown to men who are actively seeking to connect with other men. Facebook also allows targeting of ads by only showing them to men who have indicated that they are “interested” in other men. This ensures a relevant audience but excludes men who haven’t disclosed their sexual orientation to Facebook (possibly missing an important population). Google likely has the most diverse audience; however it is not possible to ensure ads are only shown to gay/bi/MSM men, so ads must be crafted carefully to appeal to the desired audience.

Setting Goals and Sticking to a Budget
All advertising venues allow their customers to decide on a budget and stay within it. Facebook and Google, for instance, provide an option to limit how much is spent per day or over the total course of a campaign. This option can be useful as it allows users to get as many clicks as possible within a given amount of money – and continues the campaign until the budget is reached (and, hence, until the maximum number of clicks has been achieved). With banner advertising sites (gay.com & Squirt.org) the structure is slightly more rigid in that a defined space is purchased for a defined period of time at a set cost. There is a great deal of variability within these types of sites, however, based on the number of people visiting the site and the ad’s relevance to them. For example, Squirt.org showed the syphilis banner 9.1-million times compared to gay.com’s 1.9-million – almost five times as many – but overall, advertising with gay.com cost twice as much as with Squirt.org.

Time matters!
Looking at our advertising success over the course of the campaign, it was noted that campaigns are the most successful at the beginning when the creative materials are new to the audience, but that interest wanes over time (see Figure B, page 7). The only particular exception to this was Google advertising, which seemed to be relatively consistent over time (Figure G, page 14).

A Note about This Report
The following report is intended to communicate about CATIE’s experience and lessons learned through a particular advertising campaign. It is our hope that sharing the results of our campaign will assist other advertisers in making informed decisions about their advertising campaigns. These results, however, are not necessarily applicable to all advertising venues or campaigns, and were most likely influenced by numerous factors such as: the nature and approach of the campaign, the style and content of the ads, the way populations were targeted, and finally any other syphilis news and campaigns happening at the same time. Furthermore, since the format, style and content of the ads were different at each advertising venue, it is not appropriate to make a direct comparison or to rank success, as the ads themselves may have influenced the campaign’s success just as much as the advertising venue did. A good example of this would be the search terms used to advertise with Google search: it’s possible that if better search terms had been used, a wider and more interested audience might have been reached.

Advertisement used on gay.com
INTRODUCTION

In response to the reported increase in rates of infectious syphilis among MSM across Canada, the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) funded CATIE to nationally promote and distribute a syphilis awareness campaign. The Attack of the Cursed Syphilis campaign was originally developed by the AIDS Committee of Toronto (ACT) with the marketing firm Due North Communications, and it was further developed and distributed provincially by Ontario’s Gay Men’s Sexual Health Alliance (GMSH).

The Attack of the Cursed Syphilis campaign tested different online methods of advertising to gay, bisexual and other MSM via facebook, Google, gay.com and Squirt.org. These online methods brought more than 10,500 visitors to CATIE’s Web information page on syphilis. The theme also appeared on informational posters, brochures and a postcard specifically addressing HIV-positive gay/bi men; these were distributed to interested organizations across the country through CATIE’s Ordering Centre. To date, more than 11,000 individual print materials have been distributed to service providers across Canada.

The following report outlines CATIE’s experience utilizing different avenues for online advertising and compares some of the strategies, successes and challenges involved in using each advertising modality.

BACKGROUND

The original goal of the ACT campaign was to “raise awareness of continued high rates of syphilis infection amongst gay and bisexual men, increase knowledge about syphilis, syphilis testing, and the health impact of syphilis on HIV positive men and encourage men to seek testing for syphilis.” The campaign creative is a “humorous and campy satirical twist on 1950s B-movie and horror-film publicity materials.” The creative design and slogan emulate the original Hollywood B-movie poster ad for the movie Creature from the Black Lagoon. ACT has produced and disseminated a report outlining the background, development and evaluation of the campaign, which is available at [http://www.actoronto.org/research.nsf/pages/act.research.0379](http://www.actoronto.org/research.nsf/pages/act.research.0379).

Campaign Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Period</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Late 2009:</td>
<td>Funding made available to ACT via Toronto Public Health to develop and disseminate a multi-faceted syphilis awareness campaign for gay and bisexual men in Toronto.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early 2010:</td>
<td>Campaign developed by ACT and Due North Marketing (print materials, Web site, subway ads, paid print and on-line advertising). All materials further developed for a provincial audience by GMSH.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 2010:</td>
<td>Outreach collaterals for the campaign mailed to agencies (GMSH).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 2010:</td>
<td>Ontario campaign concluded, national campaign in development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 2011:</td>
<td>National campaign concluded.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

METHODS

CATIE uses Urchin 6.02 Web analytics software by Google to track all visits to our Web site. Urchin is a self-hosted Web analytics software platform that allows organizations to analyze the traffic coming to their Web sites. Because Urchin is hosted on CATIE servers, all Web-monitoring statistics are kept on encrypted servers and are only accessible by CATIE staff, ensuring visitors’ privacy.

Urchin allows Web site owners to assess traffic to their Web sites along different variables, such as:

- How people got to your Web site (e.g. by typing the link directly into the address bar, via a search engine, or from an on-line marketing campaign);
- Which geographic regions people are accessing your site from (e.g. which countries, provinces/territories and cities);
- How people navigated through your site, including the length of time spent on each individual page.

Urchin also filters out “robots and spiders,” which are programs designed to trawl the internet for information (for example, search Web sites that will index all the information on a Web site). It is also able to specify how many unique visitors came to your site.2

Google Analytics can provide similar information about Web site traffic, however the information is not stored on local servers and data is not available for as long, making it impossible to assess traffic changes across longer periods of time.

ON-LINE ADVERTISING CAMPAIGN RESULTS: THE NUMBERS

On-line ads were placed on facebook, Google, Squirt.org, and gay.com. Additionally, all active Canadian Squirt.org members received an e-blast containing key information derived from the campaign print materials (see Appendix I, page 18). Advertising was done in both English and French on facebook and Google, but only in English on Squirt.org and gay.com due to site limitations.

All ads pointed to CATIE’s nationally relevant syphilis Web pages, (www.CATIE.ca/eng/syphilis and www.CATIE.ca/fre/syphilis), which provide both simplified and in-depth information about syphilis symptoms, testing and treatment as well as links to Web sites listing testing sites by province and territory. Visitors are also given the opportunity to download or order the print materials through the CATIE Ordering Centre.

Squirt.org and gay.com were selected because they are among the most popular of gay dating/social networking Web sites in Canada, and further because they are utilized by men actively looking to connect with other men (a key audience). The choice of these sites saved time and helped to keep costs within the campaign budget, as CATIE was able to use the same banner design that had already been created for these sites by the GMSH. Each Web site requires a unique combination of sizes and file formats, and some advertising agencies will charge for each re-sizing and file format provided. CATIE had not yet advertised on facebook and Google, so this campaign was used as an opportunity to test and compare these new advertising venues. Facebook and Google may also reach different populations of MSM who do not utilize gay/bi/MSM social networking sites.

The graphs in Figure A (next page) compare each of the on-line advertising venues across different indicators.

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2 A slight exception to this occurs when individual visitors are using a shared internet connection, such as when multiple people at an organization visit the same Web page. In this situation they may be perceived as a single visitor since they share an IP address.
Figure A: Campaign Results Compared

**Number of Impressions**
- Facebook English: 4,055,539
- Facebook French: 1,954,323
- Google English: 236,542
- Google French: 58,831
- Gay.com banners: 1,876,457
- Squirt.org banners: 9,128,288
- Squirt.org mail-out*: 100,000

**Total Number of Visits**
- Facebook English: 2,701
- Facebook French: 1,474
- Google English: 1,275
- Google French: 518
- Gay.com banners: 1,343
- Squirt.org banners: 3,220
- Squirt.org mail-out*: 248
- Direct Visit: 1,537

**Click-Through Rate**
- Facebook English: 0.07%
- Facebook French: 0.08%
- Google English: 0.54%
- Google French: 0.88%
- Gay.com banners: 0.07%
- Squirt.org banners: 0.04%
- Squirt.org mail-out*: 0.25%

**Average Visits per Day**
- Facebook English: 38
- Facebook French: 20
- Google English: 18
- Google French: 7
- Gay.com banners: 23
- Squirt.org banners: 53

**Cost-per-Click**
- Facebook English: $0.54
- Facebook French: $0.51
- Google English: $0.98
- Google French: $1.26
- Gay.com banners: $5.58
- Squirt.org banners: $1.25
- Squirt.org mail-out*: $15.48

**Average Visit Length**
- English Page: 3min 19sec
- French Page: 6min 00sec

* See page 15 for a description of the Squirt.org mail-out
An impression occurs every time an on-line ad is displayed on a Web page. Visits are when someone clicks on the on-line ad and is brought directly to the CATIE syphilis site. The click-through rate refers to the percentage of impressions that lead to clicks on the ad. The cost-per-click tells us exactly how much it cost for each unique visit to the CATIE syphilis Web pages via each of the different advertising venues. This is calculated by dividing the total cost of advertising on each site by the total number of visits. Direct visits are when someone has typed the Web site address directly into the address bar of their Web browser; these visits are most likely driven from distributed print materials (pamphlets, brochures and posters).

Squirt.org and gay.com use traditional Web advertising models where banner space is purchased for a fixed amount of time and the cost is the same regardless of how many people actually click on the banner. These sites estimate the number of impressions that will be shown over the course of a campaign and charge according to this estimate, however once the price is agreed upon it does not change based on the final number of impressions.

Facebook and Google differ in that they give advertisers two pricing schemes: they can either pay a set amount per 1,000 times the ad is shown (impressions) on the site, or they can pay only for the instances where a user sees the ad and clicks through to the Web site being advertised (click-throughs). For CATIE’s syphilis campaign, we paid for click-throughs rather than impressions since our primary goal was to drive people to our Web site, which contained important information. If an advertiser’s primary objective is brand recognition, or if the take-home message can be encapsulated in a small ad, paying by number of impressions might be a better option.

The final graph depicts the average amount of time users spent on the French (6 minutes) and English (>3 minutes) CATIE syphilis sites. Overall, when people did click through to the site they took the time to read at least some of the content available.

These statistics suggest a number of important and helpful lessons about conducting on-line advertising through different venues:

- Both facebook and Squirt.org drove the most traffic to CATIE’s syphilis Web site, however they required a large number of impressions (or views) to drive such traffic. These were the most effective advertising venues for our campaign.
- Google ads drove the most traffic to CATIE’s syphilis Web site per impression. For campaigns where it is very important for people to actively click through to your Web site, Google might be a good option.
- Traditional Web advertising models used predominantly by gay/bi/MSM social networking sites (Squirt.org and gay.com) are on average more expensive to use than sites like facebook and Google. This must be balanced by the fact that click-throughs from gay/bi/MSM sites might be more valuable depending on the audience you are trying to reach.

CAMPAIGN PRINT MATERIALS

A postcard, brochure and poster suitable to a national audience were created and distributed to organizations across Canada for outreach and educational purposes. Samples of these materials can be seen in Appendix II (page 19) where Table 1 lists how many of each print material have been distributed. All three materials point to CATIE’s national syphilis Web site, which most likely accounts for the Direct Visits observed in the upper-right graph of Figure A (page 5). Materials remain available for order from the CATIE ordering centre.

Print media (such as posters, brochures and postcards) were relatively effective at driving traffic to the Web site (as indicated by the Direct Visit bar in the Number of Visits chart, page 5). Print media have the added benefit of containing condensed/summarized information, so driving traffic to the Web site might be a bonus.
### Table 1: Print materials distributed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Number Printed</th>
<th>Total Quantity Distributed to Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poster – French</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poster – English</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>418</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postcard – French</td>
<td>2,500</td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postcard – English</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>2,473</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brochure – French</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>975</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brochure – English</td>
<td>12,000</td>
<td>6,877</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total of All Materials</strong></td>
<td><strong>28,800</strong></td>
<td><strong>11,043</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### THE CAMPAIGN OVER TIME

Figure B (below) depicts the cumulative levels of Web site traffic over time. The three main peaks shown in the graph align with the launch dates of particular segments of the campaign. The first peak in early December indicates the launch of the Facebook campaign. Google advertising, which began in mid-December, did not show an initial spike like the other advertising venues. The largest peak in late January represents the launch of both the gay.com and Squirt.org banners. Lastly, the peak in mid-March indicates the Squirt.org mail-out.

This figure suggests that ads which are very successful when first launched saturate the market and lose their appeal to audiences over time. Squirt.org was a particularly good example of this; more detailed information will be given in the site-specific discussions below.

Depending on the length and budget of a campaign, it might be wise to create multiple versions of banner ads to attract different types of audiences and enhance overall traffic to a site.
All on-line advertising venues give advertisers the option to target their ad campaigns to certain geographic regions (also known as geo-targeting). Since ACT and GMSH had already advertised to users in Ontario, CATIE elected to advertise to all provinces and territories excluding Ontario.

Table 2, above, details approximately how many visits the CATIE syphilis English and French sites combined received from each region of the country, as well as the percentage of total visits each province/territory accounted for. For comparison purposes we have also listed the percentage of the total Canadian population in each province/territory.

These numbers give us an idea of how successful on-line advertising for the CATIE syphilis campaign was in each province. Overall, the proportion of visits to the site was comparable to the size of the population in each province. Ontario comprised a notably lower proportion of the total visits, which is not surprising given its exclusion from the campaign. We were informed post-campaign, however, that Squirt.org elected to advertise to Ontario members as a value-added bonus, hence the resulting visits.

SITE-BY-SITE DISCUSSIONS

Each advertising venue is unique in terms of the audience reached, strategies for success, benefits and limitations. The following sections discuss each advertising venue in more detail to facilitate decision-making when using these venues.

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3 "Population estimates, age distribution and median age as of July 1, 2010, Canada, provinces and territories". Statistics Canada. 2010-09-29.
### facebook

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pros</th>
<th>Cons</th>
<th>Tips</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • Ads can be targeted to very specific audiences.  
• Ability to pay per click-through, low cost-per-click and successful click-through rates make this attractive for smaller budgets.  
• Ad interface provides a high level of detailed information about the users who click through your ads (enhanced campaign tracking). | • To target to MSM, users must actively specify an interest in men on facebook. Users who do not specify that they are interested in men are thus missed.  
• Ad disapproval (a process through which facebook pulls ads from its site) creates challenges. Successful ads seem to be at highest risk for disapproval. (See page 10 for details.)  
• There is a question as to whether English facebook will censor gay/bi health-related ads (see below). | • Remember that facebook advertising will probably be most successful with younger audiences.  
• From the beginning try multiple versions of the same ad with different pictures, headlines and text. Monitor your campaign to see which ads are most successful.  
• Directly mentioning gay/bi men in ads can greatly increase click-through rates.  
• Facebook advertising is flexible and adaptive. Monitor your campaign and look for what’s working and what’s not. Don’t be afraid to add, remove or change ads. |

Facebook sells advertising space for small text- and image-based ads that run along the right-hand side of user’s pages. Once advertisers have designed their ads they can set either a daily or overall budget to ensure costs are contained.

Because facebook has a significant amount of information about its users, advertisers can be highly specific in selecting who their ads will be shown to (a process facebook calls targeting). Some of the criteria advertisers can target by including geo-location (down to the level of cities), age, sex, interests, education and work, and even the user’s relationship status and whether they’ve indicated they’re interested in men or women. As the advertiser selects an increasingly specific population, a small box on the Web page is automatically updated with the estimated number of facebook users that will be reached.

It should be noted that while targeting allows advertisers to reach a very specific audience, it also restricts the ads to being shown only to those men who have acknowledged that they are interested in other men in their facebook profile information. Thus gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men who have not explicitly identified as being interested in men will not be reached using this targeting method.

A unique aspect of facebook advertising is Ad Disapproval. Each time a facebook user is shown an ad, they have the option to click a small ‘x’ in the upper-right corner of the ad, allowing them to “remove” the ad and prevent it from being shown on their page again. Once an ad has been “removed” by a user they also have the option to specify why. The options given are: uninteresting, misleading, sexually explicit, against my views, offensive, repetitive

Approximately 32,040 English-speaking and 17,100 French-speaking facebook members were targeted for CATIE’s syphilis campaign. The following criteria were used:

- ✓ live in Canada
- ✓ live in Alberta, Quebec, Saskatchewan, Yukon Territory, Northwest Territories, Nunavut, British Columbia, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Newfoundland, Nova Scotia or Prince Edward Island (All provinces & territories except Ontario)
- ✓ age 18 and older
- ✓ male
- ✓ interested in men
- ✓ speak English (for English-version ads) or speak French (for French-version ads)
or other. Based on this feedback, facebook will occasionally discontinue or “disapprove” the ad and block it from being shown. See below for a more detailed discussion about ad disapproval.

Comparison of Individual Ads’ Success

Due to the disapproval of some of CATIE’s facebook ads, a direct comparison of different ad styles is not straightforward. Reviewing the analytics of each ad, however, some observations are notable:

- Ads that explicitly mentioned gay/bi men were considerably more successful than those that didn’t. In fact, the ads that didn’t mention gay/bi men were so unsuccessful, we pulled them early (see page 11).
- The original ad was by far the most successful at achieving click-throughs. This success, however, seems to have brought the ad an equal amount of negative attention, which ultimately led to its being disapproved due to “negative user feedback.”

This comparison suggests that, for English audiences at least, a balance must be struck between effectiveness and general palatability to the audience you are targeting.

Disapproval of Ads

Eighteen days into CATIE’s facebook campaign, CATIE received an e-mail from facebook specifying that the English ad had “been disapproved due to negative user feedback concerning the ad’s content.” Because facebook would not provide any more information about Ad Disapproval and what criteria must be met for an ad to be disapproved, it is difficult to know how or why the original English ad was disapproved.

In response to the original English ad disapproval, CATIE created four new ads with different images and content to see which ads would be successful and which wouldn’t. Each part of the ad was changed from the original, to determine for what reason the ad may have been disapproved.

During the second run of English ads on facebook, the fourth alternative ad (English Alt. 4 in Table 3) was disapproved. This time facebook indicated that “the text of your ad contains language that is not suitable for display on facebook.” This raises questions as to whether facebook censors health- or sexual health-related advertising and information, and whether this information is not considered “suitable” when specifically targeted to gay/bisexual/MSM men.

The original French ad was never disapproved and thus ran for the entire intended length of the campaign.
### Table 3: Comparison of facebook Ad Success

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ad Description</th>
<th>Days Running</th>
<th>Total Impressions</th>
<th>Visits (Click-Throughs)</th>
<th>Click-Through Rate</th>
<th>Average Visits per Day</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>French Original</strong></td>
<td>75</td>
<td>1,954,323</td>
<td>1,474</td>
<td>0.08%</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;La syphilis en hausse!&quot; catie.ca</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Les cas de syphilis augmentent chez les hommes gay/bi au Canada. Renseignez-vous sur les symptômes, test et traitements ici!</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>English Original</strong></td>
<td>18</td>
<td>813,500</td>
<td>1,190</td>
<td>0.15%</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>![Disapproved]**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Syphilis is on the rise!&quot; catie.ca</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syphilis rates are rising among gay/bi men in cities across Canada. Click here to learn about symptoms, testing and treatment!</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>English Alt. 1</strong></td>
<td>54</td>
<td>2,208,793</td>
<td>1,095</td>
<td>0.05%</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>![Disapproved]**</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;Syphilis is on the rise!&quot; catie.ca</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>English Alt. 2</strong></td>
<td>23</td>
<td>220,531</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>0.03%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>![Disapproved]**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Syphilis Information&quot; catie.ca</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>55,762</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0.04%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>![Disapproved]**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;New Syphilis Information&quot; catie.ca</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>756,953</td>
<td>328</td>
<td>0.04%</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>![Disapproved]**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**For an explanation of ad disapproval, see page 10.**

### Facebook Ad Performance Over Time

Figure C (page 12) shows how ads fared over time. This shows how the most successful ad (the original English ad) also drew the most attention, eventually leading to its disapproval. Facebook ads appear to peak slightly when first initiated but eventually reach a plateau, suggesting that a longer campaign might have led to a consistent number of people visiting the site over time.
Demographics of Audience

Facebook provides a monthly breakdown of the demographics (age, gender, location, etc.) of the people who click-through ads during a campaign. This can be helpful in determining what audiences are being reached through Facebook as well as which audiences are not targeted by this medium.

Figure D shows the proportion of click-throughs represented by each age group for the Facebook segment of CATIE’s syphilis campaign. This clearly shows that Facebook was most successful at reaching younger audiences, with each successive age group representing less of the overall click-throughs to the CATIE syphilis site.

Figure D: Age distribution of Facebook Audiences
Google

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pros</th>
<th>Cons</th>
<th>Tips</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Very high click-through rate when ad is shown.</td>
<td>• Not as easy to directly target your ad to a desired demographic (e.g. gay men), meaning a proportion of clicks might not be from your target audience.</td>
<td>• Specify your target audience in the text of your ad to ensure the right people are clicking through.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Google search is a high-traffic, well known venue.</td>
<td>• Extremely limited space (95 characters, including spaces, for headline and ad text).</td>
<td>• Get creative with search terms used (what types of things would gay/bi/MSM search for on Google?).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Many different types of advertising spaces available (mobile, search engine, advertising spaces on Web sites).</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Ad approval takes a few days; create and submit for approval well before you’re planning to launch your advertising campaign.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Google provides many advertising opportunities through its AdWords service ([http://adwords.google.com](http://adwords.google.com)). The most basic of these opportunities is through the Google search function. Advertisers can create lists of search terms that, when typed into a Google search bar, will lead to the ad’s being shown at the top of the search results.

Figure E shows both the English and French versions of the Google ads. Google ads have an extremely limited amount of space for text and thus words have to be chosen very carefully.

**Figure E: Google Ads**

![Syphilis is on the rise.](http://www.catie.ca/eng/syphilis)

![La syphilis en hausse.](http://www.catie.ca/fre/syphilis)

By choosing search terms carefully it is possible to get the information you are trying to share to the people who are actively seeking it. Google also has the ability to suggest search terms that are closely related to the initial list you construct. Figure F shows the top 5 search terms in English and French that drove traffic to the CATIE syphilis site.

**Figure F: Top 5 Most Successful Search Terms**

**Top 5 Most Successful English Search Terms for CATIE’s Syphilis Campaign:**

1. squirt.org
2. photos of syphilis
3. syphilis pictures
4. std symptoms
5. syphilis

**Top 5 Most Successful French Search Terms for CATIE’s Syphilis Campaign:**

1. syphilis
2. syphillis
3. la syphilis
4. siphilis
5. siphylis
A potential challenge with advertising in Google is ensuring that people who are clicking through to your site are the actual target audience you are aiming to advertise to. For example, the CATIE syphilis campaign was specifically targeting gay/bi/MSM men in Canada. Including broad search terms such as “syphilis,” however, could have lead anyone to visit the CATIE syphilis Web site. While it is important for everyone to have information about syphilis, because the campaign was looking to provide gay/bi/MSM men culturally appropriate information, in order to ensure the right people were clicking through, gay/bi men were explicitly mentioned in the ad.

Similar to the other advertising venues, Google also allows for ads to be geo-targeted.

**Google Ad Performance Over Time**

Figure G shows how the Google French and English ads did across time. Google was the most consistent advertising venue as it did not peak at the beginning of the campaign in the way that the other advertising venues did. The gap observed from late January to early February is a good reminder for advertisers to make sure that start- and end-dates are properly set in Google Ads – and to monitor ads (for human error)! Lastly, it appears that of all the advertisers, Google is most likely to cycle the ads of a campaign, meaning that ads will only be shown at certain times of the day. This explains why there seems to be so many peaks in the figure. This makes assessing the success of Google ads more difficult, since an ad has no hope of being successful when it’s not being shown.

![Figure G: Google Ad Performance Over Time](image.png)
Squirt.org and gay.com

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pros</th>
<th>Cons</th>
<th>Tips</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Great for targeting to and reaching a large audience of men who have sex with men (particularly those who are sexually active and looking for partners).</td>
<td>• Each site has different file formats and banner sizes, requiring a unique set of files. Modifying your ads for each site can be costly/time-consuming.</td>
<td>• Get quotes from multiple sites prior to advertising and compare rates. Don’t hesitate to negotiate and to request non-profit pricing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Less labour intensive: create your ads, agree to cost and campaign length, and let the campaign run.</td>
<td>• Higher cost-per-click than other advertising venues.</td>
<td>• Ask about ad tracking to monitor click-throughs and number of impressions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Builds relationships with companies that provide an important and influential role in many gay/bi/MSM men’s on-line communities and experiences.</td>
<td>• Difficult to measure the success of Squirt.org e-blasts.</td>
<td>• Remember that sites will be variably located in the US and Canada. Make sure to note whether the quotes and prices you’re reviewing are in Canadian Dollars (CAD) or US Dollars (USD).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Strong initial successes plateau quite quickly.</td>
<td>• Consider developing different banners to switch up during your campaign, which could help maintain interest with your audience.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Gay/bi/MSM social networking sites such as Squirt.org and gay.com sell advertising through their sales departments. Advertising through these sites is usually a more formal process where the advertiser requests a quote for the ad to be displayed over a defined time period at a set cost, regardless of how many people click through to the advertiser’s Web site.

Squirt.org E-Blast

Squirt.org offers advertisers the option to send a direct, geo-targeted “broadcast” to Squirt.org members. The broadcast appears as a message in each member’s Squirt.org inbox, similar to an e-mail. CATIE sent all active Canadian Squirt.org members (approximately 100,000 members) a broadcast containing key information derived from the campaign print materials. A sample of the e-blast sent as part of CATIE’s syphilis campaign can be seen in Appendix I, page 18.

Broadcasts are able to contain as much information as an advertiser feels is appropriate (similar to an e-mail). For the syphilis campaign, click-throughs (and hence cost-per-click) are therefore not as good an indicator of success since the most pertinent information was already contained within the broadcast itself.

At this time Squirt.org does not have the capability to indicate whether a broadcast, once sent to individual users, has been opened or read. This makes it difficult to assess the success of broadcasts in comparison to banner advertising.

What can be said about the Squirt.org broadcast, however, is that out of the approximately 100,000 members that received the broadcast, 248 clicked through to the CATIE syphilis Web site for more information. This represents a click-through rate of 0.25 percent, which is very good compared to banner advertising. These can be considered high-value click-throughs considering that the broadcast reached a directly relevant MSM audience. Further, those who clicked through for more information had most likely at least skimmed the broadcast information. This suggests that the messaging encouraged them to seek more information and perhaps the list of testing locations.
Squirt.org & gay.com Ad Performance Over Time

Looking at how the Squirt.org and gay.com banners advertised over time shows that for some sites (such as Squirt.org), a good many visitors click on ads when they are new, but that slowly over time the market becomes saturated and the ads slightly lose their effectiveness. This suggests that campaigns that run for longer periods using the same ads lose value in terms of click-through rates over time.

Figure H: Squirt.org and gay.com Performance Over Time

![Graph showing Squirt.org and gay.com performance over time]

TAKE-HOME MESSAGES

On-line advertising to gay/bi/MSM men can be an effective and relatively inexpensive way to drive people to your Web site. There is an increasing number of options for advertising on the Internet, and choosing the right advertising venue can be difficult. Decisions about which site to advertise through should be answered by asking a few key questions:

- **Do you want your ad simply to be seen, or are click-throughs important to drive people to your site?** If you’re interested in exposure and brand recognition – say, with a program within your organization – gay/bi/MSM social networking sites might be more effective at building a relationship with your community (see discussion below).

- **What kind of budget are you working with?** Sites with pay-per-click pricing schemes (facebook and Google) tend to be less expensive, and running campaigns for a longer period of time (particularly on banner sites like gay.com and Squirt.org) may not be as cost effective.

- **Who exactly do you want to advertise to?** Different sites will be more effective at reaching out to different demographics. Facebook, for instance, is more likely to reach younger audiences while Squirt.org and gay.com are more likely to reach audiences of men who are actively looking to connect with other men.

Despite being more expensive and less flexible, advertising on gay/bi/MSM social networking sites might have longer-term benefits than sites like facebook and Google. Working with these sites helps to build relationships with
the companies that run them, which could facilitate other types of on-line outreach and research in the future. Further, advertising through these Web sites supports businesses that are providing an important service to gay men. Lastly, advertising on gay/bi/MSM social networking sites may help build your organization’s brand recognition among gay/bi/MSM communities in ways that advertising on Facebook or Google might not.

CATIE’S Gay Men’s Sexual Health Project

In January 2011, CATIE launched the Gay Men’s Sexual Health Project, an exciting initiative to facilitate the creation of a national platform for service providers to share ideas, information, experiences and best practices. The project aims to address the particular HIV, sexual and other health needs of men who have sex with men, who identify as gay, bisexual, two-spirit, queer, straight, pansexual or otherwise. This project is informed by the report New directions in gay men’s health and HIV prevention in Canada.

For more information about the Gay Men’s Sexual Health Project, contact Len Tooley at ltooley@catie.ca.
Appendix I: Squirt.org E-Blast

Syphilis is back: Get Tested! Get Treated!

To learn more visit www.catie.ca/eng/syphilis or keep reading...

HOW IT’S AFFECTING OUR COMMUNITY
- Across Canada, cities have seen a huge rise in syphilis over the past seven years.
- In most cities gay and bisexual men have been hit hardest by it, and as many as 50% of syphilis cases are among men who are HIV positive.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW
- Syphilis is spread through intimate body contact including skin-to-skin contact as well as unprotected oral, anal and for some trans guys frontal genital sex.
- You may have syphilis and not know it. Some people develop visible symptoms of syphilis infection, but others don’t.
- Among other things, syphilis can cause skin lesions, a rash, fevers, and/or headaches.
- Syphilis makes HIV transmission more likely between sex partners.
- You can get syphilis more than once.

GET TESTED!
- A simple blood test can tell you if you’ve got it.
- If you are sexually active, it is important to get tested for syphilis regularly.
- Tell your doctor that you want to have a syphilis test, or find out where you can get tested.

GET TREATED!
- If it’s caught early, syphilis can be treated with antibiotics. If you find out you have syphilis, it’s important to get treated and then follow up with your doctor to make sure the treatment worked.

POZ GUYS LOOK OUT!
- As a POZ guy your syphilis infection may take longer to both treat and cure.
- Without treatment, syphilis can make you very, very ill.
- Syphilis may increase your "viral load" (a measure of HIV in your blood). This can speed up the rate at which HIV damages your immune system.
- Syphilis will not go away if left untreated.

For more information visit www.catie.ca/eng/syphilis

1-800-263-1638
www.catie.ca    www.hepCinfo.ca

1 Buddies Online   269 Guys Checked you out
Appendix II: Print Materials

Post Card

(front)

ATTACK OF THE CURSED syphilis
POZ GUYS LOOK OUT!

Starring:
SYPHILIS - YOU - AND YOU - AND MAYBE YOU TOO

If you've got HIV, syphilis can hit you harder and faster.

(back)

SYPHILIS IS BACK!
• Syphilis is spread through intimate body contact including skin-to-skin contact as well as unprotected oral, and anal and for some trans guys frontal genital sex.
• You may have syphilis and not know it. Some people develop visible symptoms of syphilis infection, but others don’t.
• Among other things, syphilis can cause skin lesions, a rash, fever, and/or headache.
• Syphilis makes you more likely to transmit HIV to sex partners.
• If you are sexually active, it is important to get tested for syphilis regularly. Tell your doctor you want to have a syphilis test.
• You can get syphilis more than once.

GET TESTED!
• As a POZ guy your syphilis infection may take longer to both treat and cure.
• Without treatment, syphilis can make you very, very ill.
• Syphilis may increase your ‘viral load’ (a measure of HIV in your blood). This can speed up the rate at which HIV damages your immune system.
• Syphilis will not go away if left untreated.
• If you find out you have syphilis, it’s important to get treated and then follow up with your doctor to make sure the treatment worked.

GET TREATED!
To find out more about syphilis and HIV, visit www.catie.ca/eng/syphilis
Syphilis is a sexually transmitted infection (STI) caused by bacteria that attack the body in stages. It may have symptoms or may be asymptomatic. Some people develop visible symptoms of syphilis infection, but others don’t.

**Stage One:**
The first signs of syphilis appear anywhere from 10 to 90 days after exposure. You may notice a sore or rash on your penis, mouth, or rectum, or in your throat. There may be white patches on the inner lining of your mouth. The sore will go away after 3 to 6 weeks. The syphilis, however, won’t.

**Stage Two:**
4 to 10 weeks after the sore, you may notice a red rash on your chest, palms, soles, or the sides of your body. Muscle and joint pain, fever, and patchy hair loss are also common in stage two. These symptoms can go away without treatment, but again, the syphilis won’t go away.

**Stage Three:**
The rash and buttons will disappear, but the syphilis will come back to your brain, heart, and muscles, causing serious damage. You may have symptoms such as headaches, muscle weakness, or numbness. This process occurs over a 10 to 20 year period.

**HIV and Syphilis:**
If you get HIV, syphilis can hit you harder and faster, and may also be more difficult to treat. If you’ve got syphilis, you’re more likely to get HIV. It’s very important for HIV-infected people to deal with syphilis.

**How It’s Spread:**
Syphilis is spread through intimate sexual contact including unprotected anal, oral, and for some types, penis-vaginal sex. You can also get syphilis by sharing drug needles. These plans should take note that sharing needles to inject hormones is also considered a high risk activity.

**Get Tested:**
A simple blood test can tell you if you’ve got it.

**Get Treated:**
If you’ve got syphilis, antibiotics can fix it. It’s important to get treated and then follow up with your doctor to make sure the treatment worked.

**Having Someone You May Have Syphilis:**
If you feel you’ve passed syphilis onto someone but don’t know how to take the news to them, contact your local public health department. They’ll help you talk to the person you’re concerned about your health status in your area.
ADVERTISING ON THE INTERNET: TIPS & LESSONS FROM CATIE’S ON-LINE ADVERTISING CAMPAIGN

Poster

ATTACK OF THE CURSED SYPHILIS

IT’S LURKING IN THE DEPTHS, WATCH OUT!

Starring
SYPHILIS - YOU - AND YOU - AND MAYBE YOU TOO

www.catie.ca/eng/syphilis

CAN ALSO BE SPREAD THROUGH ORAL SEX AND KISSING

IF YOU’VE GOT IT, SYPHILIS CAN HIT YOU HARDER AND FASTER.

TREATABLE IF CAUGHT EARLY. GET TESTED.

GMSH

CATIE

act