The Impact of the Popular Media on Awareness: Aap Ki Antara

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Nidhi Singhal, PhD
Tamara Daley, PhD
Merry Barua

Action For Autism
National Centre for Advocacy, Research, Rehabilitation and Training
New Delhi, India

COI: None
Autism in India

- Considered rare; ‘an illness of modern civilization’
- Delays and misdiagnosis
- High use of pharmacological and alternate therapies: Pranic healing, Reflexology, Astrology, Acupressure, Yoga, Ayurveda, Homeopathy
- Lack of appropriate and adequate intervention centers
- Schools not geared to meet special needs
- Significant economically disadvantaged population
- Low awareness levels and high stigmatization
## Media Penetration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>1998</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Television sets</td>
<td>70 million</td>
<td>105 million</td>
<td>119 million</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cable connections</td>
<td>25 million</td>
<td>52 million</td>
<td>62 million</td>
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Total television viewership: 415 million; amongst world's highest

(CII-KPMG, 2007)
June 2009:

An Indian television network with a reach of about 120 countries and access to over 500 million viewers globally launched a nightly soap opera called 

*Aap Ki Antara* (Yours truly, Antara)
Each episode concluded with

- Three minute 'testimonial' from a family member of a person with autism
- Number of a seven-hour telephone helpline (Mon–Fri, 1pm–8pm)
- Address for website of national Indian autism organization: Action for Autism
Method

• Selected a five-week sample period (Sep-Oct 09) after the initial launch

• Documented calls

• Coded content and background data about caller/child

• Used website analytics to compare sample period and pre-launch period
Documentation of basic information
a. Location of the caller
b. Age of the person of concern
c. Sex of the person of concern
d. Relationship of caller to person of concern

Additional information
a. Purpose of the call
b. Knowledge of autism prior to the serial
c. Nature of services person of concern currently receives
Results:
Call Summary

• During initial months:
  (Jun–Aug 09) > 50 calls / day

• During the five week sample period:
  (Sep–Oct 09) = 336 calls total

• Average of approx 15 calls / day
Who is Calling

- Mother: 37.9%
- Father: 30.7%
- Grandparent: 2.5%
- Aunt/uncle: 5.9%
- Sibling: 6.2%
- Self: 0.9%
- Other relative: 3.4%
- Non-relative: 12.4%
All figures are in percentage

Location of Caller

- North, 38.9
- South, 6.5
- Central, 16.4
- East, 17.9
- West, 18.5

Outside India, 1.9
(including Dubai, Nepal, Pakistan, Thailand, & Italy)
Location of Caller

Andhra Pradesh: 2.5, Assam: 0.3, Chandigarh: 3.1, Dadra-Nagar-Haveli: 4, Goa: 5.6, Haryana: 0.3, Jammu & Kashmir: 2.2, Karnataka: 3.1, Madhya Pradesh: 2.8, Nagaland: 0.9, Punjab: 2.8, Uttar Pradesh: 4.3, West Bengal: 8, Others: 1.9.
Characteristics of Person of Concern

• 72% calls were about children who are male

• Wide age range
  – 2 months to 35 years
  – Mean = 9.5 years (SD=6.7)
Diagnosis

- ASD: 34.8%
- MR, Down's: 14.3%
- Other (seizures, blind, brain damage): 8.5%
- "Delay, slow, will be OK with age": 7.1%
- CP: 3.1%
- No diagnosis: 28.6%
- Don't know: 3.6%
Of the callers with a child diagnosed with autism

- 48% of children did not attend any school
- 36% attended a special school
- 16% attended a regular school
65% of all callers reported that they were not aware of autism prior to watching 

Aap Ki Antara
During sample period (Sep – Oct 09) site received 7,781 visits from:

- 129 countries and territories
- 79% of these were new visitors
- 42% of the visits were from India (79 cities)
- 27% were from the U.S. (51 states)
Compared to a five week period before show was launched (Apr – May 09):

- An increase of 35% total number of visitors
- An increase of 30% of first time visitors

97% increase in people accessing the site through direct entry of website address
• Television as a medium can be a powerful source for raising awareness
  – Includes penetration in rural areas where access to services is limited

• Popularity of show independent of accuracy of portrayal
  – Can serve as a reference point
  – Validation of personal experience
Next Steps…

• Documenting awareness of AAK through intake information sheets

• Small awareness study on *My Name is Khan*

• Applied for funding for an IVR+phone counseling helpline

• Developing 30 second spots for TV and theaters

[www.autism-india.org](http://www.autism-india.org)
Thank You!

Nidhi Singhal
dr.nidhisinghal@gmail.com

Tamara Daley
TamaraDaley@westat.com

Action For Autism
actionforautism@gmail.com