

Perceptions of Public Drinking Water in NL: a Mixed Methods Study

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"The best way to get something done is to begin."
-Author Unknown



Outline

- Background
- Objectives/Purpose
- Methods
- Summary Points & Recommendations
- Acknowledgements
- Questions and Comments



Ottawa Charter

- Health is, "a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, an individual or group must be able to identify and to realize aspirations, to satisfy needs, and to change or cope with the environment. Health is, therefore, seen as a resource for everyday life, not the objective of living." (World Health Organization)
- "Disease prevention covers measures not only to prevent the occurrence of disease, such as a risk factor, but also to arrest its progress and reduce its consequences once established." (World Health Organization)



Action Impact



Potential Risk

- Reduced confidence in public drinking water can lead consumers to select alternatives to their public tap water, such as bottled water, untreated ponds or roadside springs, or various in-home treatment methods.



Moving Upstream

- It is important to understand what water sources consumers are using and why, and to address any potential health problems relating to public and alternate water sources before they experience negative health outcomes relating to water-borne contaminants.
- This upstream approach to health involves identifying risk factors and at risk populations



Burden of Enteric Illness

- Enteric Illness caused by a variety of factors, including water
- Generally mild and self-limiting
- Potentially devastating
 - Walkerton
- 34% linked to drinking water were a public water system



Boil Water Advisories

- Boil Water Advisory
 - Public announcement advising the public that they should boil their tap water for drinking and other uses.



"We don't live in a world of reality; we live in a world of perceptions"
~Gerald J. Simmons



General Reasons for Perceptions

- Aesthetics of water (taste, odour, colour)
- Chlorination
- Media
- Information sources
- Trust in utility workers



Objectives

- The purpose of this study was to examine perceptions of public drinking water in NL. Specifically, the main research objectives were to identify the:
 - perceptions of the quality and safety of public tap water;
 - factors that influence public drinking water consumption patterns;
 - reported reasons for alternative water use; and
 - expressed need for information on drinking water.



Mixed Methodology

- Qualitative and quantitative component
 - Focus Groups & Telephone Survey
- Surveys: trends and patterns
- Focus Groups: meaning making



Methods: FG

- 6 Focus Groups on Avalon Peninsula
- Random digit dialing
- Questioning Route
 - Public perceptions, alternative water use, treatments devices, boil water advisories, public knowledge...
 - Short demographic questionnaire
- Thematic Content Analysis



Methods: TS

- Recruitment: Commercial Database
- Sampling Frame: Newfoundland and Labrador
- 1000 Interviews
 - 500 Public and 500 Private
 - Public perceptions, alternative water use, treatments devices, boil water advisories, public knowledge, demographics...



Limitations

- Selection bias
- Recall bias
- Limited to public drinking water
- Not a program evaluation



"In time, and with water, everything changes."
~Leonardo da Vinci



Recommendations



Summary 1

Participants judged the safety of their public tap water by the aesthetics (colour, clarity, odour, taste, smell) of the water.



Summary 2

When people doubt their public water safety, they may turn to alternative water sources such as bottled water, roadside springs, or various in-home treatment methods.



Summary 3

Transparency in communications about the public water supply system is positively linked with consumer trust in household drinking water and those who maintain the public water supply.



Summary 4

There is low compliance with provincial recommendations for safe uses of public water use during a BWA.



Summary 5

Participants wanted more and improved public water supply information.



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Questions?!

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