



Case Study: Helping Macmillan Cancer Support review and refine their cancer information booklets

Macmillan is synonymous with information and support, and has a reputation for producing award-winning and top-quality cancer information. At a time when people might be feeling shocked and overwhelmed, clear communication is critical – not only for the individual concerned but also for their friends and family.

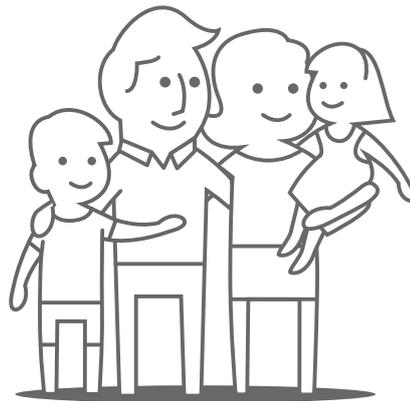
Considering that 1 in 2 people (50%) born after 1960 in the UK will be diagnosed with some form of cancer during their lifetime*, never has there been more demand for clear, usable and accessible information.

Every title produced by Macmillan is reviewed in line with the Information Standard. As part of this process each publication is reviewed by relevant professionals and people affected by cancer. But in 2014, Macmillan also asked Luto to review and do some in-depth testing on 10 of its cancer information booklets. The content and focus of the booklets ranged from understanding various cancer types to physiological problems associated with the disease. It also covered topics such as the psychological and financial impacts upon individuals and their families.

Project brief

Luto's task was to conduct an in-depth appraisal of Macmillan's cancer information booklets through:

- An expert review using heuristic evaluation
- User testing to see how 'real' people could find and understand key points of information.



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Why Macmillan were keen to test their booklets

- Current review processes rely on a rather receptive group of people who have normally used Macmillan services. Some may be seen as 'expert patients'. Macmillan were keen to test their content with a wider group of people from different socio-economic backgrounds, who may not have used Macmillan services directly.
- Macmillan had trialled some new design elements, such as colour-coded tabs, and wanted to test the effectiveness of these.



* Source: Cancer Research UK, www.cancerresearchuk.org/health-professional/cancer-statistics/incidence [Accessed August 2015]



The heuristic evaluation

During the heuristic evaluation, our information experts reviewed Macmillan's materials against accepted key principles for good information design. The output from this process was a list of potential issues.

Key principles of good written information:

- Simple words, minimal jargon
- Short sentences with one message
- Bold for emphasis - not capitals or italics
- Conversational tone
- Ample white space and left-justified text
- Bullets to organise blocks of text
- Navigation aided by contents list
- Clear short headings and sub-headings
- Pictures and graphics clear and unambiguous
- Instructions in clear steps

Why user testing?

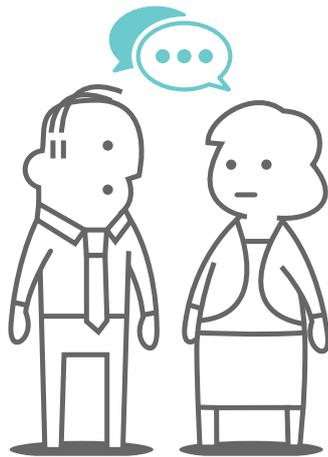
Put simply, user testing starts with the assumption that the end user is King. So who better to assess the usefulness and accessibility of healthcare information?

Luto has built a large database of 'real' people - representative of all the major socio-economic and demographic groups. Then, for each discrete project, we select a representative sample of people in the target group for the information.

The project with Macmillan involved 100 people - 10 individuals for each booklet. User testing involved individual interviews where participants were asked to:

- a) Find and express key information in their own words.
- b) Provide feedback on the booklet.





What do we mean by 'real' people?

Out of the 100 people who were interviewed:

- 50 had experience of cancer
- 50 had no experience of cancer.

This 50/50 split was especially important to Macmillan, who wanted to replicate the moment someone may be diagnosed with cancer 'out of the blue' and be handed a printed booklet.

As an example, some participants' job titles included:

- Christmas grotto manager
- Retired air-traffic controller
- Warehouseman
- Teacher
- Care assistant
- Stand-up comedian
- Cleaner

So, these were 'real people' – not expert patients or people linked to patient organisations. The more 'real' the people in user testing, the more useful are the results.



What worked well with current Macmillan booklets?

- Almost all participants thought the booklets were written at the right level for them.
- Many participants said the booklets helped them feel less alone.
- Participants said they appreciated the large type size.
- The 'title' page for each new chapter worked well.
- Most participants said they would know where to go for further help or information.
- Almost all participants said they would recommend the booklet to others.



Examples of improvements resulting from review and user testing

- Purpose of each booklet and who should read it clarified at the beginning of the booklet.
- Difficult words and jargon translated into clear English for example, 'experience' becomes 'have'.
- Bold colours used for sub-headings to aid navigation.

- Chapter about the 'staging' of cancer made clearer by using tables effectively.
- Complex sentences split into shorter, individual points.
- Some contents pages re-worked to improve navigation.
- Photographs re-styled to give them more context and to better complement the text.

“
Since implementing Luto's suggestions, I can see that our booklets are even more accessible
”

Abi Howse, Quality and Improvement Officer, Macmillan Cancer Support

What Macmillan say

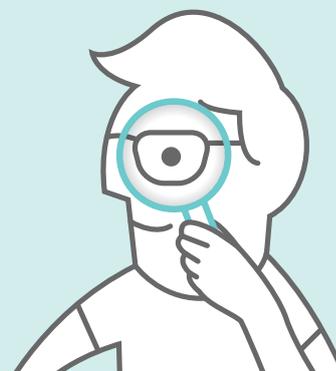
“Luto provided us with an in-depth report on their findings. We have always involved users in every booklet we produce, but working with Luto gave us the chance to go one step further and do more in-depth testing with more people. It was great to do some testing on how people actually use the booklets, whether they could locate the information they needed inside them, and whether the booklets were easy to read and understand. The resulting report had lots of suggested changes, many of which we've already implemented because we know they are based on the best evidence – real users' experiences. Since implementing Luto's suggestions, I can see that our booklets are even more accessible.”

Conclusion

The booklets are currently at a very high standard for written health information. Furthermore, participants provided positive feedback and the booklets were well received.

However, the heuristic review and user testing identified several areas where there are opportunities to bring the material to an even higher level.

Luto proposed a number of improvements to the booklets as a result of the above findings. These relate to improvements in the effectiveness of content, design and layout.



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