

The News-Heartfile public awareness campaign

'The News International' is the largest circulating English newspaper in Pakistan, reaching out to over 2.5 million readers every day. The prestigious national daily provided complimentary space for Heartfile articles as part of 'The News-Heartfile Public Awareness Campaign against Heart Disease.' The target group for this campaign was the English literate urban and rural population.

Weekly articles along with coloured illustrations of the Heartfile mascot and the logo lettering in red were prominently posted on the inside front page of the newspaper. The style of the articles varied from topic-oriented discussions on a specific aspect of a risk factor to information-based articles generated in response to a particular question; in addition, stories and checklists advocating healthier lifestyles were also published. Boxes were inserted in the articles, inviting questions via e-mail.

The campaign started in February 1999, and at the time of its conclusion in May 2006, as many as 259 articles had been published. The archive of publications can be accessed below. The project evaluation can be [viewed here](#).

Funding:

Department for International Development, UK; 2001-2004.

Canadian International Development Agency; 1999-2001

Reduce weight for a healthy heart

Safa was overweight. And she was worried. She was 5'5" and weighed 88 kilograms. She was 55-year old and did not exercise at all.

Over the past few weeks, she had started noticing that she would start puffing after walking only a few minutes and would have to sit down to catch her breath. She knew that she had been putting on weight recently, but surely it cannot have been that much right? I mean her sister was even more overweight. But then when she thought about it, she realised that her sister had quite a lot of health problems, including heart disease.

Safa decided to go and talk to her doctor. She was very sympathetic, but when she weighed Safa, the doctor looked concerned.

"Safa, I am afraid you are putting too much of a strain on your heart," said the doctor. "Not to mention the rest of your body as well. Do you have any joint problems?"

Heartfile Checklist

Have you checked your blood pressure?
Have you started to exercise?
Have you quit smoking?
Are you eating less fat in your diet?

Safa was very surprised. In fact, her back and her left knee had been bothering her for the last couple of months, but she had had no idea that it was her weight that was the reason.

"You see," said the doctor, "we are simply carrying too much weight. Your joints cannot cope with it and neither can your heart."



"What can I do?" asked Safa, horrified to think that she was damaging her heart.

"That's simple," smiled the doctor. "You need to lose some weight."

Together they sat down and worked out what Safa should eat and what exercise she should do. Safa started that very day, determined to get rid of the extra kilograms that were hardening her heart and body. Even though it was sometimes hard, she stuck with it. She kept thinking she had been a star basketball player in the college. What had happened? She had not even noticed the kilograms piling on!

Three months later, she went back to the clinic. The doctor was very impressed.

"My goodness," said the doctor when Safa got on the weighing scales, "You weigh 70 kilograms!"

How do you feel?"

Safa smiled proudly. "I feel absolutely fine," she said. "I don't get breathless anymore, I hardly ever get backache and my left knee is perfect! I have not tried to crash diet, but I have gradually changed my lifestyle like you advised. I only lost 1.5 kilograms per week, but look at the difference it has made!"

Safa is now 60, and enjoying herself. She goes for walks most days and watches her diet. She looks five years younger than she is and feels 10 years younger than she looks. She is heart healthy. And all it took was a bit of will power and self discipline.

The News-Heartfile public awareness drive against heart disease
A DFID-funded project
Website: <http://heartfile.org>