

## **Check Yourself...self-care messaging through social media!**

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Reaching young people with their cancer risk and self-care messaging requires health promotion strategies that are both engaging and entertaining. A comprehensive approach, using multi-faceted awareness activities, has been successful in reaching this population at risk, but ongoing technical advances require innovative approaches to share vital self-care information.

In Canada, Team Shan Breast Cancer Awareness for Young Women (Team Shan) has developed an effective social marketing strategy to reach young women with their breast cancer risk and breast health information. Team Shan media and marketing campaigns on college and university campuses across the country have successfully targeted young women since 2007. Young women have responded positively to the campaigns, taken action and shared campaign messaging. Campaign activities have changed over time in response to feedback from young women, most significantly, the increased use of social media. Social media has provided the opportunity to both engage and entertain the audience.

Success of a recent Team Shan social media strategy was demonstrated in the use of Facebook and the release of the Check Yourself Canada video in October 2015. The inspiration came from Heather Walters, a young woman in England who was diagnosed with breast cancer and had a vision to make a difference for young women and young men.

With the hope of engaging young people and sharing the self-check message, Heather and a myriad of local talent produced the first Check Yourself flash mob style, musical video. The goal of the video message was to increase early detection of breast and testicular cancer in young adults and help improve outcomes for those diagnosed. Released on Facebook in January 2015, the Taylor Swift parody spread and has received over one million views.

Team Shan was motivated by Heather's social media success and her dream to go global with the Check Yourself message. Team Shan was approved to produce the Canadian version, but knew they could not do it alone.

SAIT Polytechnic has supported Team Shan awareness and education activities in Calgary since 2010. The SAIT Athletics and Recreation department staff was approached to partner with Team Shan. Together with the Trojans student-athletes, SAIT students and other campus staff, they were all enthusiastically on board to assist Team Shan. A talented videographer along with a local dance choreographer provided the expertise to produce the musical video on campus at SAIT. Through lip syncing, lip dubbing and flash mob style dancing the Canadian version of the parody was created. Following weeks of filming, editing and final tweaking the Check Yourself Canada video was launched on Facebook and YouTube.

A communication plan helped kick off the video and the reach was enhanced through sharing prompts and social media cheerleading. The video has received over 60,000 views to date and has been shared across Canada, the United States, in the United Kingdom, Ireland, France, Germany, India and Australia.

Over the first month of the video social media blitz, Team Shan received close to 10% more Twitter followers and Facebook fans. Local media was supportive of the video initiative and helped promote video sharing. Activity on the Team Shan website increased with visitors accessing the breast cancer awareness (check 'em) page and other related video pages. Most importantly, the goal for earlier detection is beginning to be realized.

Comments from viewers have been extremely positive and supportive of the Check Yourself initiative e.g., *"It's not just Boobies...Balls need checking too yeah."* Shout out to our friends at SAIT Trojans and Team Shan Breast Cancer Awareness for Young Women for this awesome Parody about regular self checks and early Cancer detection. Watch and share away! Important message! This Video can literally save lives."

The Check Yourself video has set the stage for personal self-care and encouraged young women and young men to incorporate breast and testicular self-checks into their daily lives. So, 'get your hands on to them...check yourself, check yourself, check yourself!!'



Photo by Billie Rae Busby

*The Check Yourself Canada video can be viewed at*

<https://www.facebook.com/SAITTrojans/videos/10153098040561791/>

*To find out more information about Team Shan please go to [www.teamshan.ca](http://www.teamshan.ca)*

*Please follow them @teamshan on Twitter and on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/team.shan.ca](http://www.facebook.com/team.shan.ca)*