

Exhibition

Cancer communication targets commuters

Combate ao Câncer Vai de Metro (The fight against cancer takes the metro) is a series of posters about cancer in Portuguese on display at subway stations in São Paulo, Brazil, until July, 2007. For more information see http://www.pingado.com/html/ilustras_expo_cancer.htm and http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jj_rVdWMEKw

For more information on **DNA Goes to School** see <http://www.odnaviaescola.com/indexing.htm>

Daily commuters are used to being bombarded with messages—the cheapest airline flights, the latest mobile phone, or the best way to invest money. Commuters who use the São Paulo subway in Brazil have the opportunity to see a different kind of message—that of cancer—through a poster exhibition at various stations.

Combate ao Câncer Vai de Metro (*The Fight Against Cancer Takes the Metro*) is an exhibition organised by DNA Goes to School (a non-profit organisation that aims to promote public understanding of biotechnology and biomedical research), Hospital do Câncer A C Camargo in São Paulo, and the São Paulo subway system. Project manager of the exhibition Mariana Morato Marques, a member of DNA Goes to School and graduate student of the hospital explains: “as a constant user of the São Paulo subway, I brought the idea of disseminating science inside the subway stations to one of our meetings”. “We are very excited with this project”, she adds. “We quite often realise that if people who have cancer, or their family, have learnt a little about this disease they wouldn’t take so long to seek medical attention.”

The posters portray cancer in cartoon format and discuss various topics: cellular mechanisms (figure 1); early detection; symptoms; cancer risk factors; hereditary cancer; cancer of the uterus, prostate, colon, and skin; leukaemia; research (figure 2); and treatment and prevention. One poster has questions and answers, and there is a notepad for visitors to write comments. “I love every illustration”, says Ana Carolina Cintra (DNA Goes to School), “and I think that the exhibition is very eye-catching and colourful, taking all the issues very seriously without missing a sense of softness and beauty”.

Beto Uechi and Gil Tokio (Pingado Sociedade Ilustrativa, São Paulo) designed the posters, and met exhibition organisers throughout the 3-month design process; they also obtained feedback from family and friends before finalising the posters. “We tried to transform the technical information in a more accessible language through graphics using a lot of humour”, says Uechi. “We used bigger illustrations and attractive colours in the posters to get attention.”

“Our audience consists of all kinds of people who are rushing in the subway station of one of the biggest cities in the world”, adds Marcia Triunfol, executive director of DNA Goes to School. Moreover, a challenge lay in producing an exhibition that is artistic, yet serious and realistic without being too drastic. “We have tried to be realistic in informing about measures and attitudes we can all take to decrease the chances of getting cancer or to increase the chances of successful treatment”, says Triunfol.

The portrayal of people in the posters was regarded important. “For the poster on leukaemia”, explains Triunfol, “we decided that the audience should put the expression on the [children’s] faces...and we opted for an expressionless face”. Moreover, the team chose to convey hereditary breast cancer not through family trees, but by a family photograph to show that the whole family needs to be aware. “We hope that this image might alleviate the feeling of guilt that some affected individuals have”, says Triunfol. The posters appeal to cultural issues in Brazil. For instance, a poster about dietary habits shows barbecued food, and posters on smoking discuss second-hand smoke—a fairly new idea in Brazil.

By use of the notepad at the exhibition and other analyses, Triunfol and her colleagues will assess feedback from the exhibition. Dirce Maria Carraro (Cancer Research Centre, Hospital do Câncer A C Camargo, São Paulo) thinks that the feedback has been very positive. “The people in the subway station have been very interested”, he says, adding that there are plans to display the posters at other subway stations or in shopping centres in Brazil.

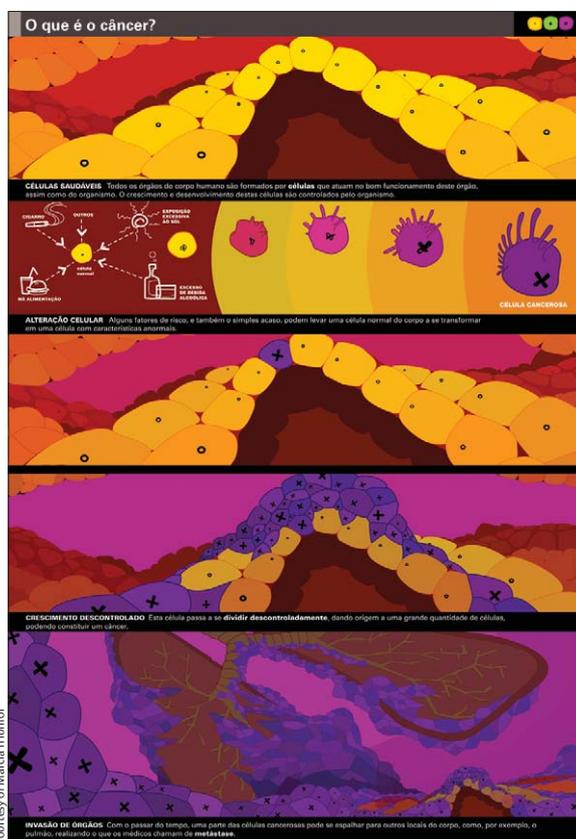
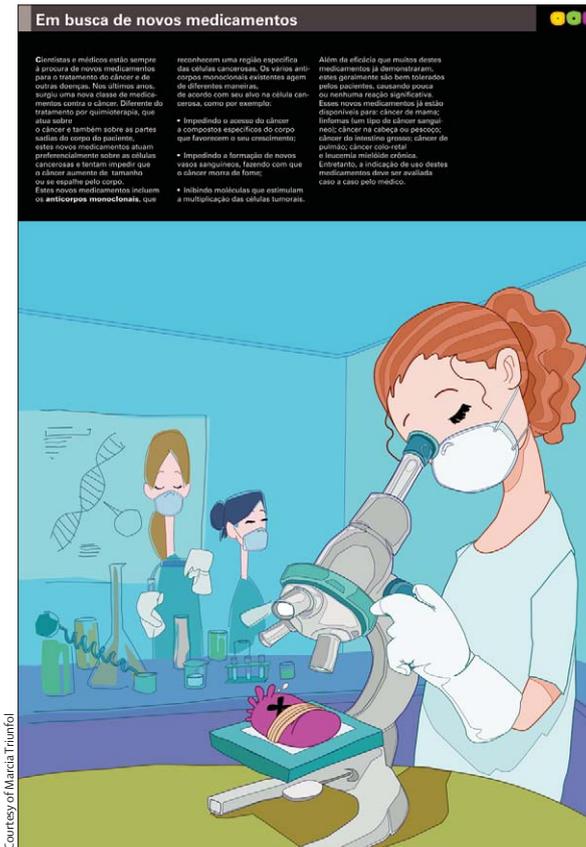


Figure 1: O que é o câncer? (what is cancer?)
This poster explains the cellular mechanisms of cancer.



Courtesy of Marcia Triunfo

Figure 2: Em busca de novos medicamentos (research and development of new medicines)

Ali Montazeri (Iranian Institute for Health Sciences Research, Iran) is interested by the exhibition and thinks that such projects can put a topic on the public agenda. Montazeri and his colleague Akram Sajadian assessed whether 777 women read poster displays about risk, detection, and prevention of breast cancer in waiting rooms at a treatment centre for breast cancer. 86% of participants reported that they saw the posters, 80% read them, 36% invited others to read the posters, and 40% spoke to someone about the posters. "Of course cancer communication is a sensitive issue", he explains, "but a well-designed campaign would help reduce anxiety, worry, and fear".

The WHO and the Government of India have developed a series of posters in English that aim to change the perception of cancer in India, especially common cancers of the oral cavity, breast, and cervix. A key aim is to highlight prevention and early detection. Although an assessment of the effect of these posters has not yet been done, they are being translated into Hindi and regional Indian languages. "Posters are important and form part of an overall media campaign", says Cherian Varghese (Non Communicable Diseases and Mental Health, WHO India Country Office, India). "They are useful if they can be widely disseminated in local languages and get talked about." However, "sustained presence has to be ensured for people to absorb the messages", he concludes.

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For more information on the study of poster displays of breast cancer see *J Public Health (Oxf)* 2004; 26: 355-58

To view the WHO and Indian government posters see http://www.whoindia.org/EN/Section20/Section385/Section401_1377.htm

Film

The Fountain

Hugh Jackman leads a trio of conquistadors towards some kind of citadel. His companions are slaughtered but he manages to gain entry. A warrior with a flaming sword informs him that "death is the road to awe", and promptly sticks a knife in his ribs. Now he is in front of an enormous tree, the scene shimmers in a dazzling white glow and someone keeps murmuring "finish it". He looks round and sees his wife (Rachel Weisz). He speaks roughly to her, only now he is in the present-day. Now he is levitating. Now he is practising t'ai chi. Now we are in the twenty-first century again: Jackman is speaking roughly to his wife, only this time he has hair. Various other things come to pass: he eats some bark, he burns some straw, and back in his darkened laboratory he prepares to operate on a patient. The patient turns out to be a monkey. I know how he feels.

And with this striking series of images, which may or may not be related to one another, Darren Aronofsky begins *The Fountain*, a "love poem to death". The mists start to clear and

we are introduced to the first of three characters played by Hugh Jackman. Dr Tom Creo is a research oncologist striving to find a cure for cancer in time to save his beloved wife Izzi. Izzi, gracefully reconciling herself to her pending mortality, has written a story called *The Fountain*. It concerns Tomas, Hugh Jackman's second role, an Inquisition-era Spaniard on a quest to discover the "tree of eternal life". He is in for a nasty surprise—eternal life can feel quite a lot like death. Jackman's enigmatic final role is a twenty-sixth century shaman called Tommy. In quiet moments, Tommy likes to ascend to the heavens in a bubble.

Requiem for a Dream (2000), Aronofsky's previous feature, was based on Hubert Selby Junior's brutal tale of addiction and moral destitution. After the dust had settled, you were left with the memory of Cliff Mansell's score, splashy piano scales and explosive swirls of despairing violins. The soundtrack here, also arranged by Mansell, is more restrained but its effect is similarly overwhelming.

The Fountain

Directed by Darren Aronofsky, 2006
20th Century Fox/USA, Warner Bros Pictures/USA
English, 96 min
On general release now