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Paper:

Peconi, J., Wright, S., Carter, A., Da Roza, C., Eden-Davies, C., Frame, R. & Mughal, A. (2019). Don't be a Lobster:

A novel way of promoting sun protection on Welsh beaches. *British Journal of Dermatology*

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/bjd.17874>

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Article type : Letter to the Editor

Don't be a Lobster: A novel way of promoting sun protection on Welsh beaches

J. Peconi^{1,2}, S. Wright^{2,3}, A. Carter⁴, C Da Roza⁵, C Eden-Davies⁵, R Frame⁵, A.A. Mughal^{2,6}

¹ Medical School, Swansea University

² Skin Care Cymru

³ Patients Know Best

⁴ MHP Communications

⁵ WCRS Integrated Marketing and Advertising Agency

⁶ Department of Dermatology, Singleton Hospital, Swansea

Corresponding Author:

Dr Julie Peconi

Swansea Trials Unit, Medical School, Swansea University, Singleton Park, Swansea, SA2 8PP

Email: j.peconi@swansea.ac.uk

Statement of Funding: Members of Skin Care Cymru, MHP Communications and WCRS volunteered their time to this campaign. The British Association of Dermatologists (B.A.D.) provided funding for 3 permanent #DontbeALobster beach signs in Swansea, Wales.

Within the UK, Wales has among the highest rates of skin cancer annually and skin cancer diagnosis rates have increased 63% in 10 years¹. The charity Skin Care Cymru (SCCym) provides a voice for skin health in Wales. Working with volunteers from an advertising agency and a communications company, in March 2017, SCCym launched a public health campaign to educate the public about ultraviolet radiation and encourage sun safe behaviour.

A cartoon symbol of a lobster to represent sunburn replaced the usual red dragon on the Welsh flag, Figure 1. The hashtag #DontBeALobster was used to promote the campaign.

After obtaining approvals, a YouTube video was produced showing the Pembroke castle flag hijacked under darkness and replaced by the lobster flag. Using #DontBeALobster the video was released anonymously to the public the day before St David's Day, the celebration of

This article has been accepted for publication and undergone full peer review but has not been through the copyediting, typesetting, pagination and proofreading process, which may lead to differences between this version and the Version of Record. Please cite this article as doi: 10.1111/bjd.17874

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the patron saint of Wales' life. On St David's Day, further lobster flags were revealed, flying high over other Welsh castles, the Severn Bridge crossing, the Millennium Centre, County Halls, Coastguard and RNLI stations and many other significant Welsh sites.

After this short period of mystery and media interest, SCCym identified itself as behind the campaign and the lobster a reminder of the importance of sun protection in preventing skin cancer. The reveal was followed up with several television, print and radio interviews. Two months afterwards, bilingual Lobster signs were erected on 3 Welsh beaches to reinforce the message.

The campaign was supported by well-known Welsh celebrities with an estimated international reach of 44 million via social, internet and print media. The launch generated 1,162 Twitter mentions resulting in 7.5 million impressions (10.5% from celebrity endorsement). By far the biggest reach was BT online reaching 8.2 million and Yahoo reaching 16.7 million. Broadcast media included BBC Radio Wales (0.5 million), BBC Sport and S4C (figures unknown). Following the campaign, looking at data from the last week of February and first two weeks of March in 2016 and 2017, an analysis of Google Trends showed a 10% increase in Google searches in Wales for "skin cancer", a 48% increase in "skin care" and a 300% increase in "sun cream" for the same time points.²

This novel campaign promoted the importance of sun protection to reduce skin cancer rates in Wales and by extension, the UK. Using the extensive support and coverage of #DontbeaLobster, SCCym will further expand and develop the campaign to measure its effect on skin cancer knowledge and sun protection behaviour. While more evidence is needed to show that mass media campaigns are as effective as multicomponent campaigns in increasing sun safe behaviour³, social media can improve knowledge and attitudes toward skin cancer.⁴

References:

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4. Gough A, Hunter RF, Ajao O, Jurek A, et al. Tweet for Behavior Change: Using Social Media for the Dissemination of Public Health Messages. *JMIR Public Health Surveill* 2017;3(1):e14.

Figure 1a: The #DontbeaLobster Flag

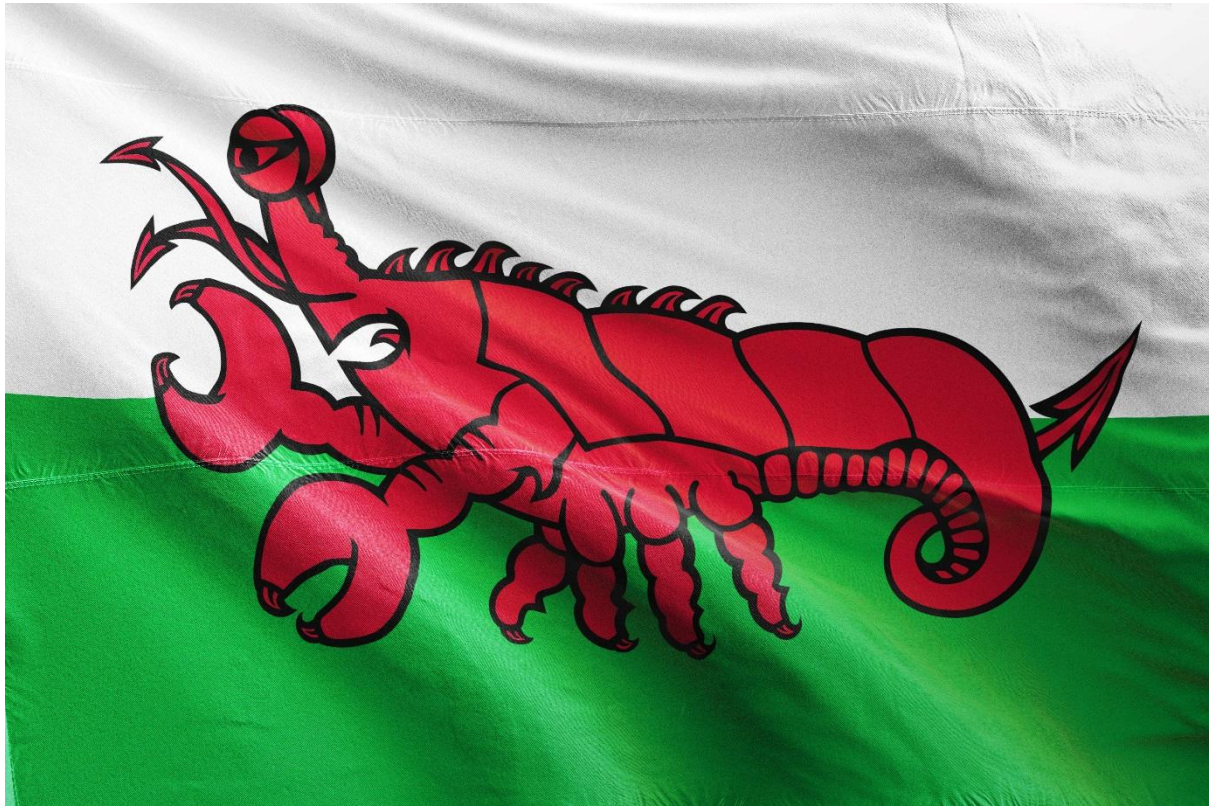


Figure 1b: #Dontbealobster flag flying at Pembroke Castle

