

Don't Give Up – Living with JIA

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Introduction

Some 1,200 children and young people are living with juvenile idiopathic arthritis (JIA) in Ireland; an autoimmune condition that can cause swollen and painful joints, impaired coordination, fatigue, high fever, rashes, and can also affect other organs, including the eyes.

This campaign builds on previous awareness and support work around JIA – and looks to communicate key messages of resilience and mental well-being when living with a chronic condition; and the importance of sport and physical activity for young people with JIA.

Entitled Don't Give Up, the campaign took a case study approach, highlighting the stories of two young people with arthritis and how they have dealt with their conditions.

Objectives

- To raise awareness and understanding of JIA.
- To give a voice to children and young people living with JIA, focusing on the challenges of living with the condition.
- To highlight the importance of physical activity for young people with JIA.
- Raise awareness of Arthritis Ireland as a national patient organisation.

Methods

The primary piece of content for this campaign was a short film telling the story of a high-profile sport star and a 16-year-old, both of whom were diagnosed with arthritis in their teens.

Niamh Rockett (27) is a leading camogie player in Ireland and has been successful at all levels in the sport. (Camogie is an amateur Irish field sport, a little like hockey.) She is also a school teacher. She was diagnosed with arthritis when she was 16 and was told she would be in a wheelchair by the time she was 30.



Mary O'Donovan (17) is a secondary school student, who also plays camogie. She was diagnosed with JIA at 13.

The film features Niamh and Mary sharing their stories of receiving a diagnosis, the challenges they have faced, how they deal with adversity, the importance of staying physically active and of not giving up hope – hence the campaign name, Don't Give Up. The film powerfully concludes by bringing the two young women together for a camogie training session.

The film was published on the Arthritis Ireland website, YouTube and social media channels in March 2021. In addition we developed a dedicated campaign subsite on our website, which housed the video, additional case study material, as well as our JIA resources. We also developed a series of social media carousels (see right) about the symptoms of JIA and the different forms of the condition.

Given Niamh Rockett's profile as a national sports star, we undertook an extensive public relations campaign, with the story featuring in national and regional, print, broadcast and online media. This included sports, as well as news coverage.

We also engaged with the national sporting body, the Camogie Association, at national and regional level, who supported the campaign through their social media channels, as did the Children's Health Ireland hospital.

Results

This was a very successful awareness campaign in terms of the key digital metrics of reach and engagement. For instance, on Facebook our posts had a 15% engagement rate (48,228 engagements from 304,074 impressions). The campaign video has been viewed 65,425 times on Facebook.

As mentioned, coverage was secured on national and regional media across print, broadcast and online channels. This coverage in turn helped drive traffic to the campaign subsite and to the social media assets. The campaign also pointed people towards JIA resources that we had previously developed.

The campaign was also successful from the perspective of engaging with other stakeholders, who helped amplify the key messages. This also increased awareness of Arthritis Ireland more generally.

Conclusions

- A case study approach is a successful way of raising awareness of a condition.
- Social media and digital marketing are key to driving awareness of a campaign.
- Pre-existing information resources and supports can be refreshed as part of a new campaign.
- Having a campaign ambassador with a personal brand and profile can help increase the visibility of the campaign.
- Parents, families and teachers are vital allies in any campaign involving young people.

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Further information

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