

# Facebook Advertising to Increase Online Community Engagement: Results of the LungCancer.net Advertisement Campaign

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## Background

Most adults who use the internet report seeking health information online (72%), and 16% turn to the internet in search of peers with similar health concerns.<sup>1</sup> The internet is often the first stop when seeking health information, given that 70% of US adults go online before turning to other sources.<sup>2</sup> In today's media-centric environment, online communities provide an ideal platform to connect users with health education and social support. The vast amount of information available online, however, makes effective marketing vital to connecting audiences to online resources. Noting this challenge, Health Union, a digital publishing company that hosts disease-specific online health communities, launched a series of Facebook advertisement campaigns to recruit new members to the LungCancer.net community. The objective of this study is to describe and evaluate these campaigns.

## Methods

Between August and December of 2017, Health Union launched five, weeklong Facebook ad campaigns with the objective of increasing the number of users that provide their email to join the community at LungCancer.net. Each campaign included three unique ads that contained an image or GIF and a call to action to join the community (see Figure 1). Within Facebook Ads Manager, a desired audience was selected to target adults over the age of 18 with an interest in lung cancer-related content. Daily budgets for the ads began at \$25/day for a seven-day period and were lowered throughout the testing period. The performance of each ad was evaluated using metrics rooted in both general and social media-specific advertisement engagement frameworks.<sup>3</sup> After each campaign, descriptive metrics were pulled for each ad, and the ad that generated the lowest opt in per cost rate was chosen to run concurrently with new ads during the next campaign.

## Conclusions

These findings demonstrate the feasibility of Facebook advertising as a recruitment tool for online communities and provides a valuable foundation for future research to optimize the reach of the LungCancer.net community and similar online health communities. Combined with additional research leveraging industry and research partners, this approach may help researchers effectively engage patients in online communities or interventions to enhance health outcomes at a relatively low cost. While Facebook may be a feasible, effective recruitment channel for such online communities, additional research is needed to systematically test the engagement outcomes of various advertisement images, text, and channels, campaign.

## References

1. Fox, S. (2014, January 15). *The social life of health information*. Retrieved from <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/01/15/the-social-life-of-health-information/>
2. Prestin, A., Vieux, S. N., & Chou, W.-y. S. (2015). *Is online health activity alive and well or flatlining? Findings from 10 years of the Health Information National Trends Survey*. *Journal of Health Communication*, 20(7), 790-798. doi:10.1080/10810730.2015.1018590
3. McGuire, W. J. (1989). *Theoretical foundations of campaigns*. In R. E. Price & C. Atkin (Eds.), *Public communication campaigns (2nd ed., pp. 43-67)*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

## Results

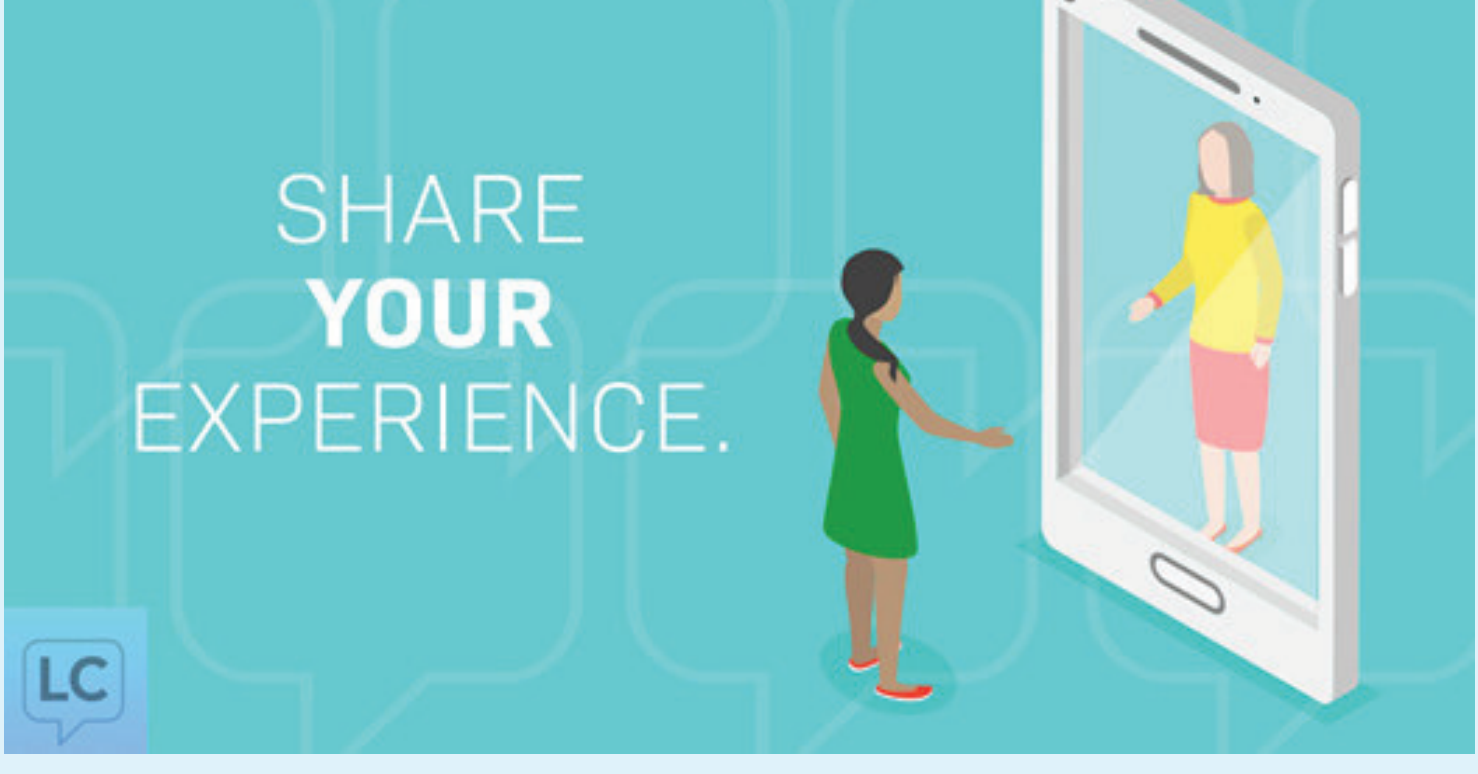
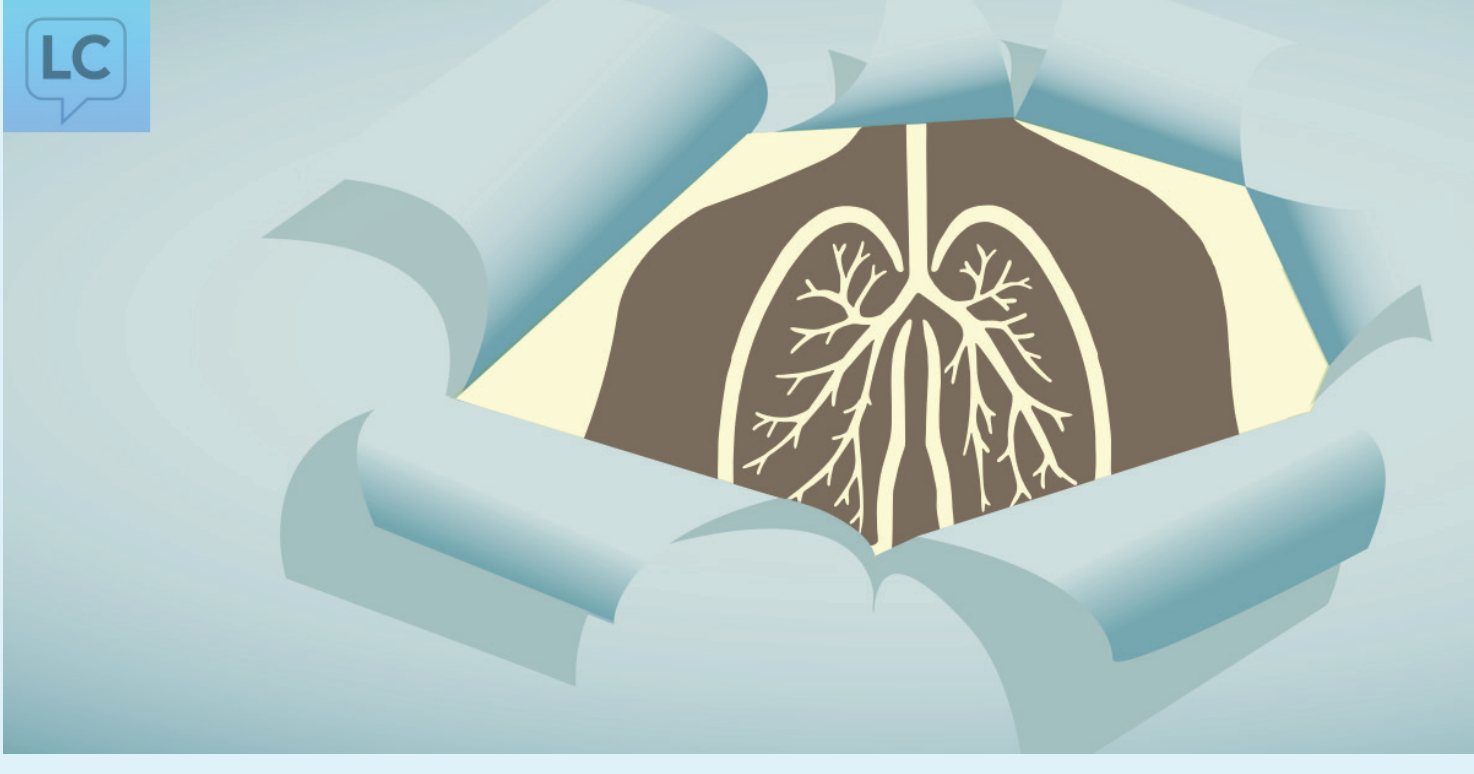

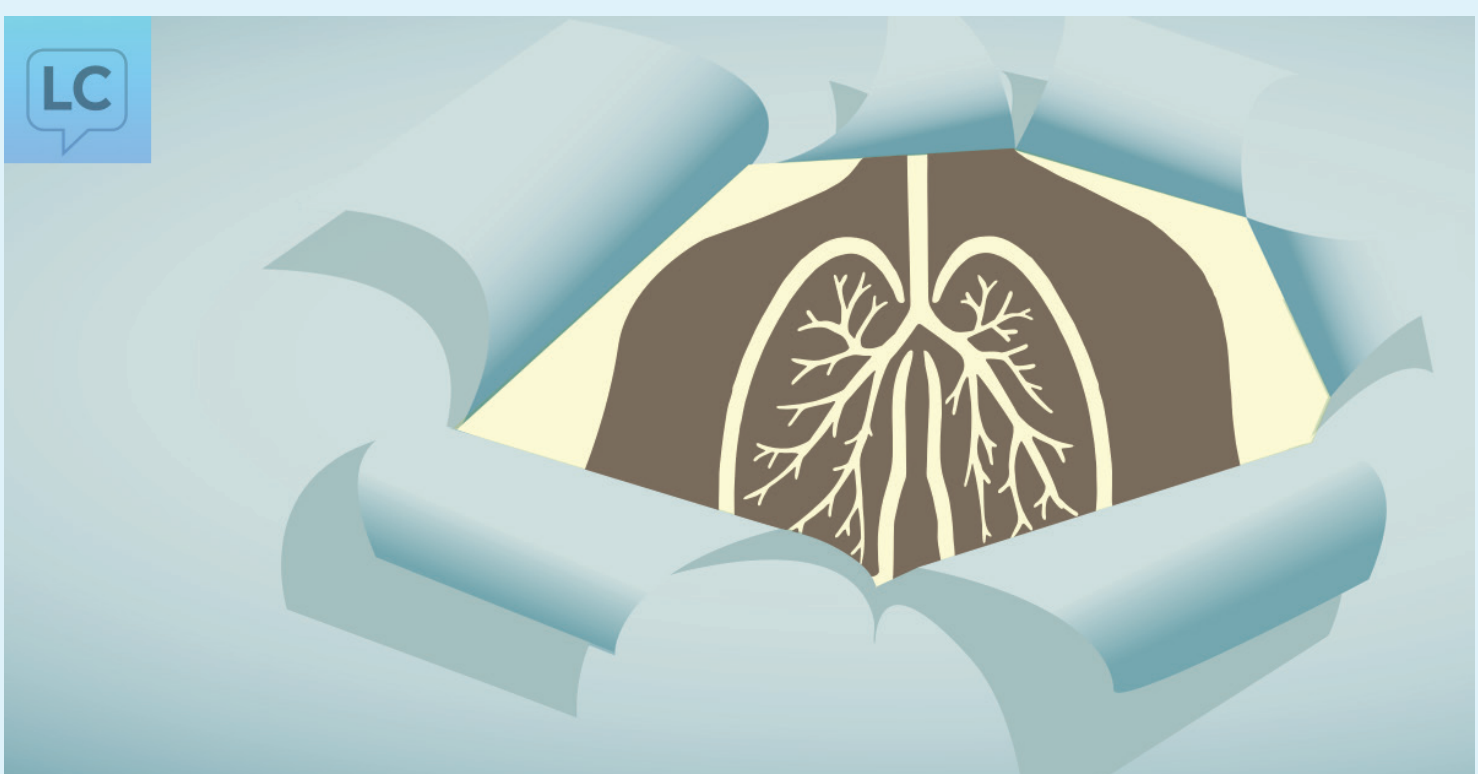

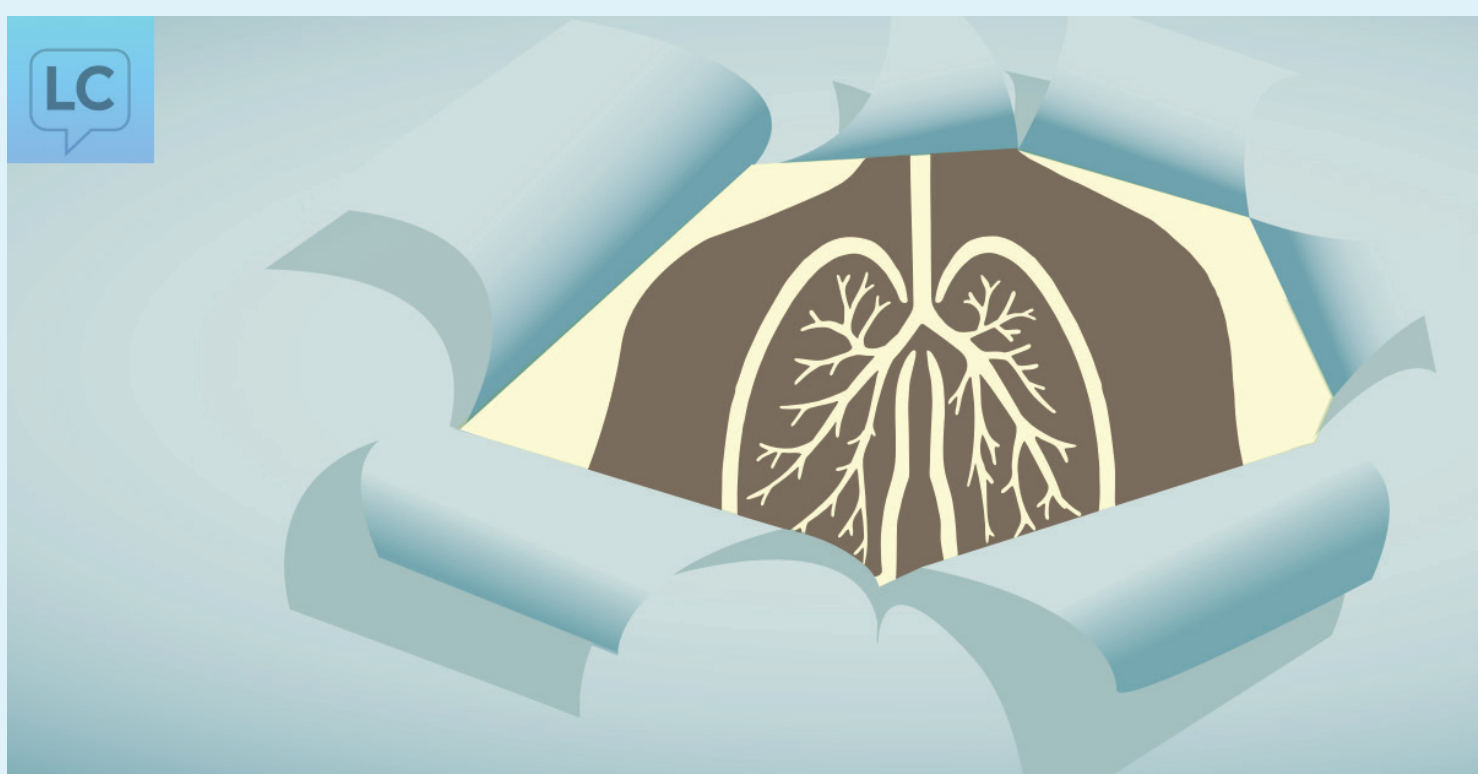
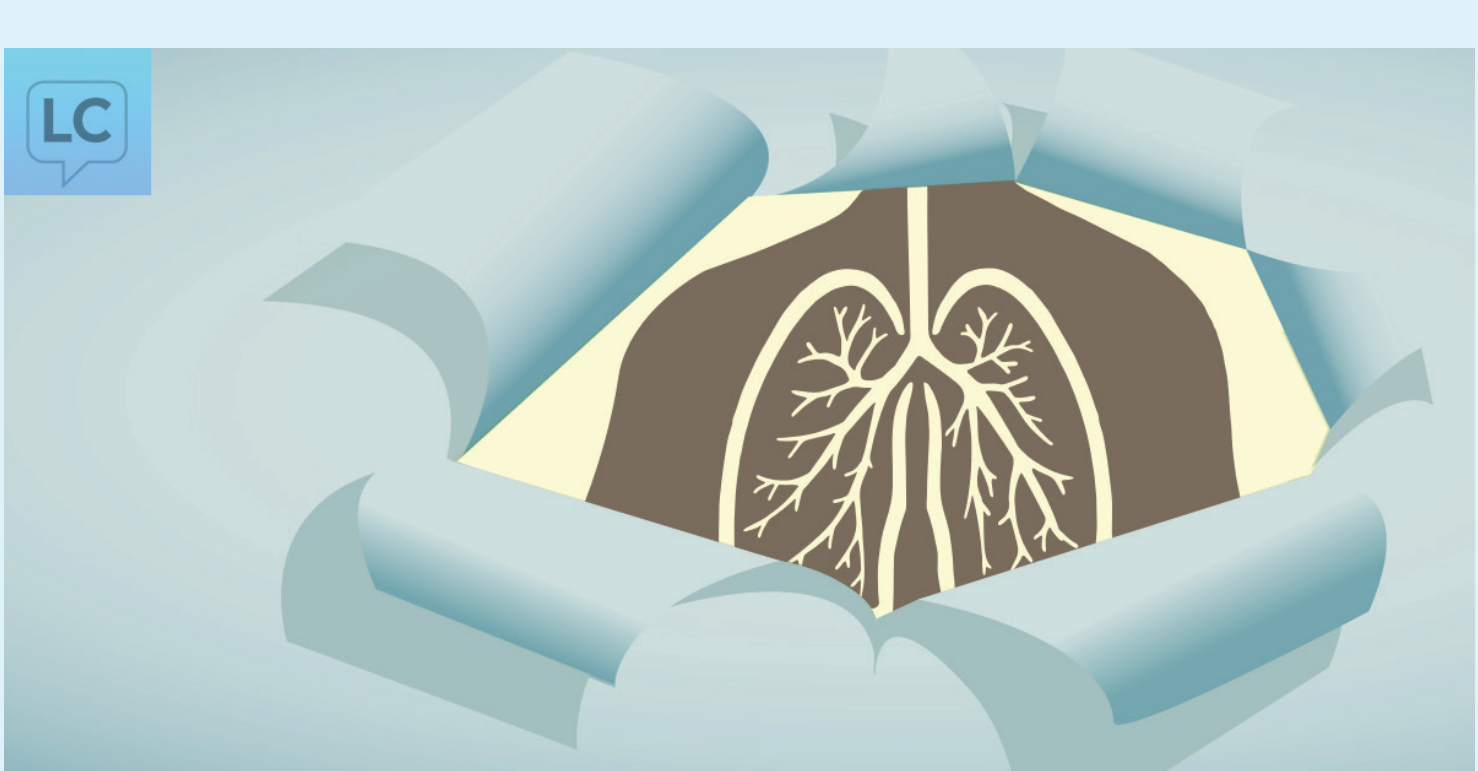
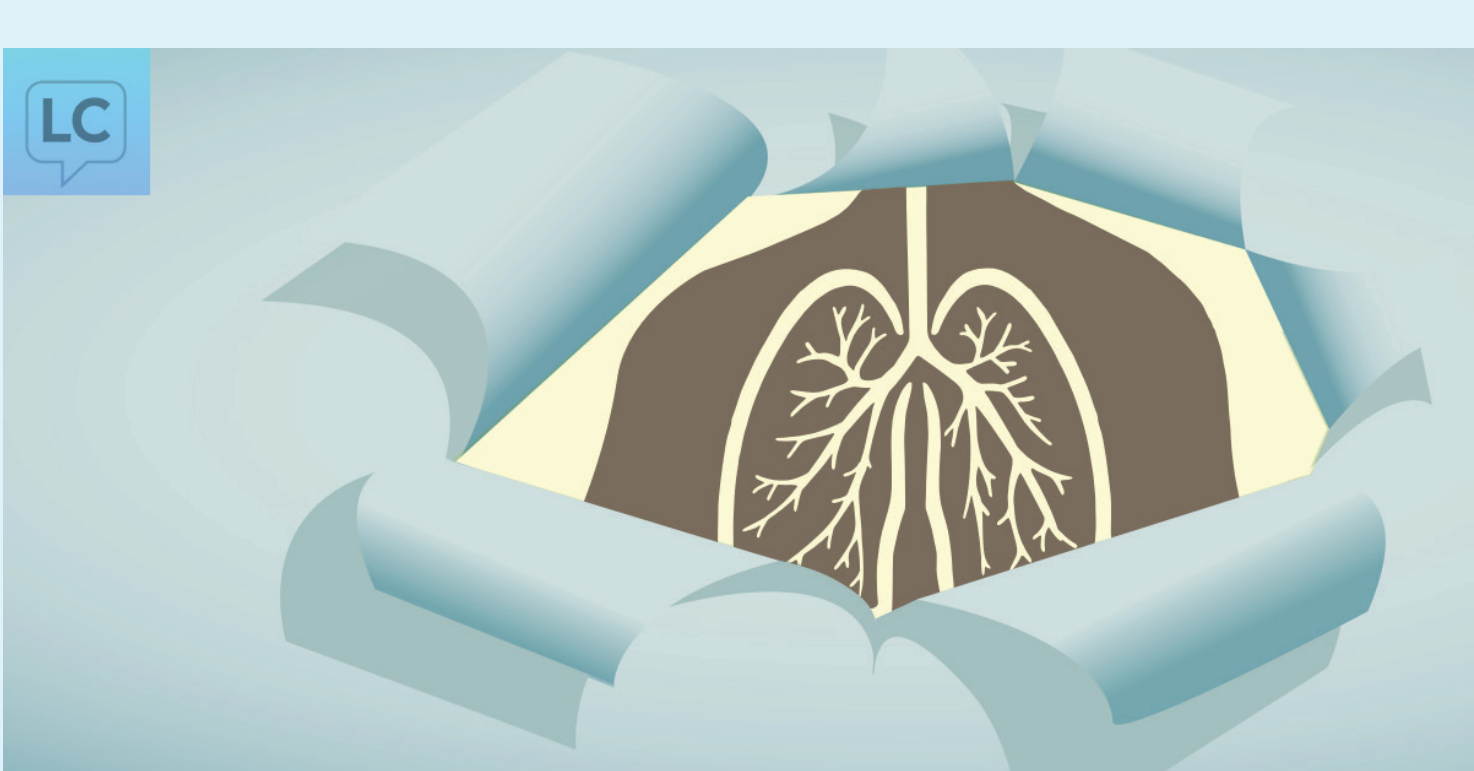
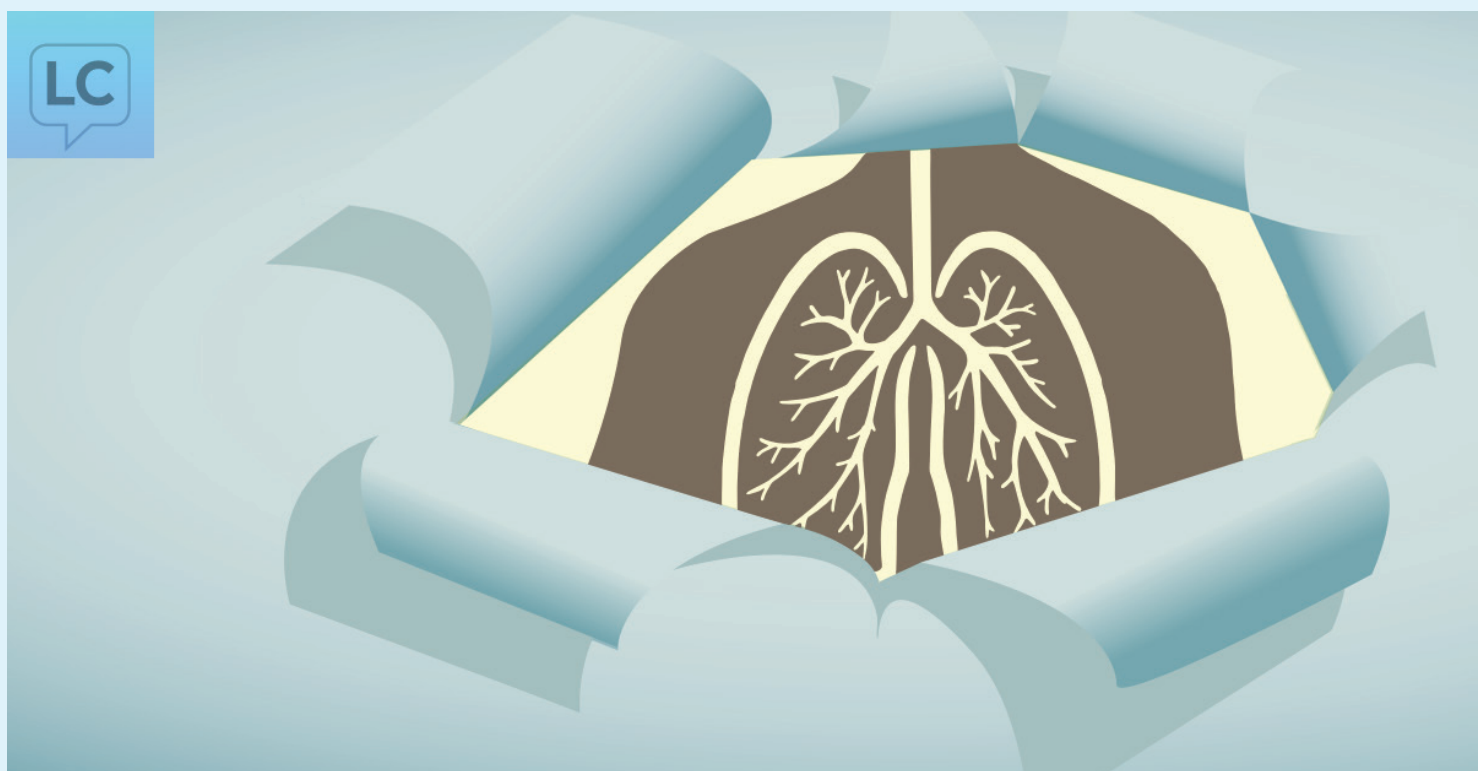
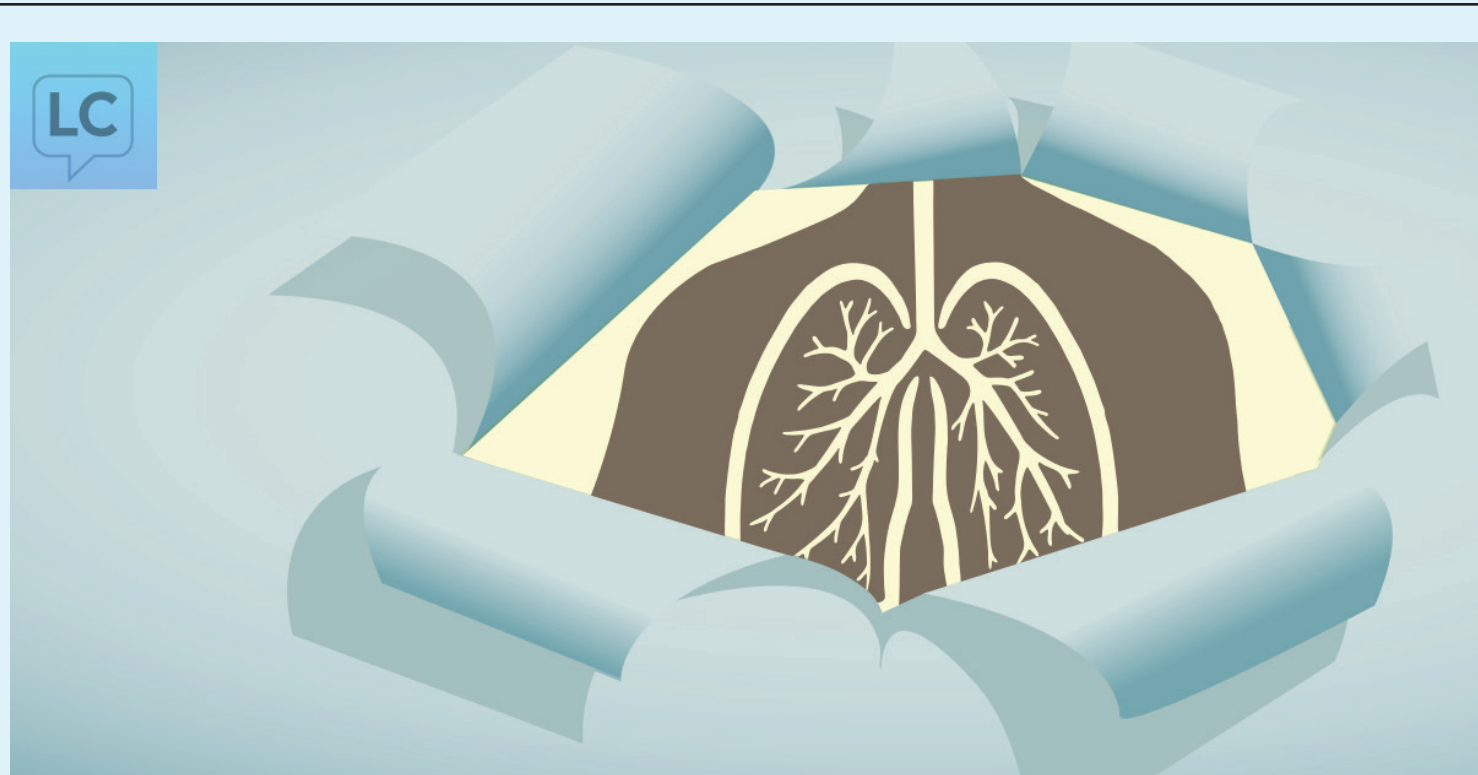




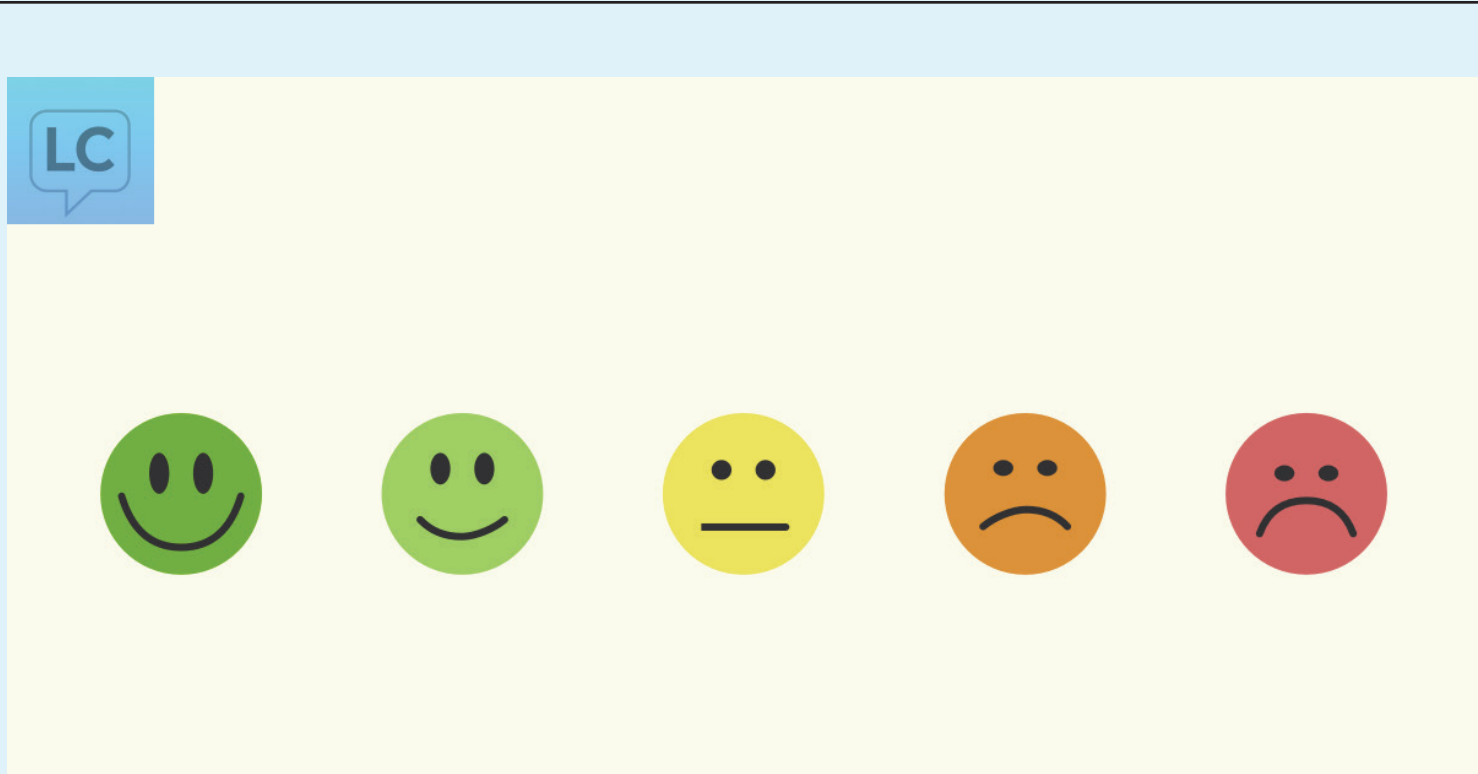
Over the course of the five weeks the ad campaigns were distributed, 91,835 people were exposed to at least one of the study ads (defined as "reach"), and 863 people signed up to receive emails and join the LungCancer.net community through the ad campaign (defined as "opt-ins"). Given that \$1,742 was invested throughout the five campaign weeks, approximately \$2.02 was spent per each new community member (see Table 1). Females between the ages of 55 and 64 represent the largest population reached by the campaign (34%), while females aged 65 and older represent the largest population who joined the LungCancer.net community in response to this exposure (36%).

Table 1: Facebook Advertisement Engagement and Cost Results

Ad	Ad Exposure	Ad Engagement					Cost	
		Reactions	Shares	Comments	Opt-ins	Opt-in Rate	Opt-in/Cost Rate†	Total Test Cost
A	7,206	83	16	9	34	0.47%	\$5.10	\$173.29
B‡	10,556	221	44	6	81	0.77%	\$1.99	\$161.14
C	8,494	219	51	8	72	0.85%	\$2.23	\$160.11
B‡	10,546	170	34	15	78	0.74%	\$1.85	\$144.31
C	9,326	173	37	13	55	0.59%	\$2.64	\$145.15
D	6,484	238	35	8	61	0.94%	\$1.86	\$113.27
B	6,078	94	35	13	48	0.79%	\$1.89	\$90.64
E	4,018	195	22	5	60	1.49%	\$1.51	\$90.54
F‡	4,778	194	26	19	82	1.72%	\$1.10	\$90.14
F	4,711	151	33	11	60	1.27%	\$1.73	\$103.89
G	3,468	141	23	5	35	1.01%	\$2.53	\$88.41
H‡	3,952	179	31	9	60	1.52%	\$1.47	\$88.44
H	4,671	189	25	13	43	0.92%	\$2.45	\$105.28
I‡	4,146	171	23	8	50	1.21%	\$1.89	\$94.28
J	3,401	184	17	15	44	1.29%	\$2.12	\$93.48
Total	91,835	2602	452	157	863	0.94%	Average: \$2.02	Total: \$1742.37

‡ Signals the highest performing ad (generated the most opt-ins/cost) that was subsequently used in the next ad campaign  
† Opt-ins/reach

Figure 1: Facebook Advertisement Campaigns Images and Text

 <p>A: Sign up for updates from Join the LungCancer.net to get valuable support and the latest news!</p>	 <p>B‡: Connect with others who understand what life with lung cancer is like.</p>	 <p>C: Join the LungCancer.net community to stay up-to-date on the latest treatments and research.</p>
 <p>B‡: Connect with others who understand what life with lung cancer is like.</p>	 <p>C: Join the LungCancer.net community to stay up-to-date on the latest treatments and research.</p>	 <p>D: Join the LungCancer.net community to stay up-to-date on the latest treatments and research.</p>
 <p>B: Connect with others who understand what life with lung cancer is like.</p>	 <p>E: "I am thankful for forums like this one as it allows us to share our stories and keep positive."</p>	 <p>F‡: "After reading some of the comments on LungCancer.net, no more self-pity, no more discouragement, as I read these comments of strength and survival and determination I feel revived."</p>
 <p>F: "After reading some of the comments on LungCancer.net, no more self-pity, no more discouragement, as I read these comments of strength and survival and determination I feel revived."</p>	 <p>G‡: "After reading some of the comments on LungCancer.net, no more self-pity, no more discouragement, as I read these comments of strength and survival and determination I feel revived."</p>	 <p>H‡: "After reading some of the comments on LungCancer.net, no more self-pity, no more discouragement, as I read these comments of strength and survival and determination I feel revived."</p>
 <p>H: "After reading some of the comments on LungCancer.net, no more self-pity, no more discouragement, as I read these comments of strength and survival and determination I feel revived."</p>	 <p>I‡: A place to share the good, the bad, and everything in between.</p>	 <p>J: A place to share the good, the bad, and everything in between.</p>

‡ Ad that generated most opt-ins per cost and was used in the next campaign

† Image displayed as a GIF. When played, it appears as if someone is typing the words "lung cancer support group" in the search bar.



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LungCancer.net  
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