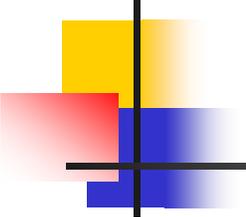


Cancer-Focused News Coverage and Information Seeking

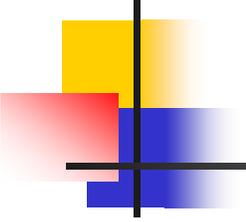
Jeff Niederdeppe, Dominick Frosch
& Robert Hornik

Center of Excellence in Cancer Communication Research
Annenberg School for Communication
University of Pennsylvania



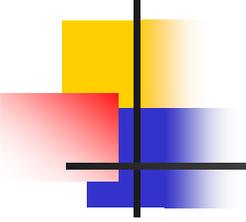
The Context

- Shift toward viewing patients as active consumers of health care
- Rapid growth in the availability of health information (e.g., on the Internet)
- To what extent do people react to public information about cancer by seeking additional cancer-related information?



Prior Research

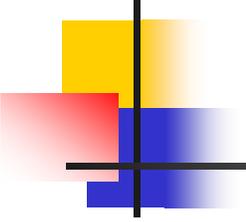
- Cancer information seeking research has focused primarily on cancer patients
- Studies examining effects of news coverage have found associations between news coverage and preventive health behavior
- Studies have found large impact of high-profile news events (e.g., Katie Couric, Magic Johnson, Ronald and Nancy Reagan)



Research Questions

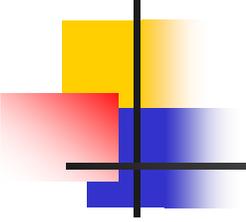
- Test relationship between “routine” news coverage and cancer-related information seeking among general population

- Explore two moderating hypotheses
 1. Cancer experience (personal or close friend or family member)
 2. Attention to health-related news topics



Measuring Cancer-Focused News Coverage

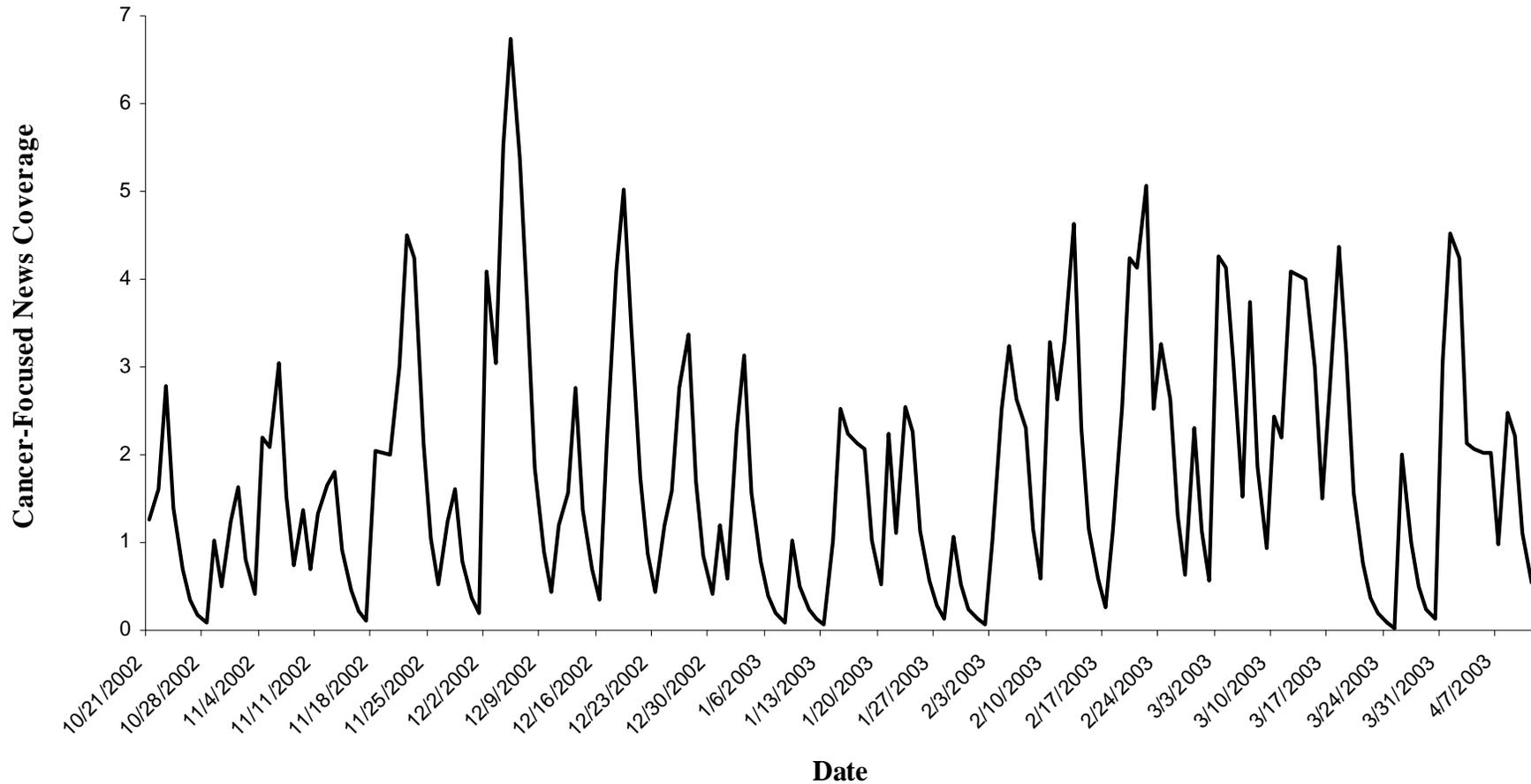
- Lexis-Nexis database search for cancer-related articles in the Associated Press
 1. Calibration sample (June 1–June 7, 2003)
 - Coders identified cancer-focused articles from “cancer” as search term
 - Kappa = 0.86
 2. Validation samples (26 random days, One per week)
 - Developed more sophisticated search term to capture only relevant articles

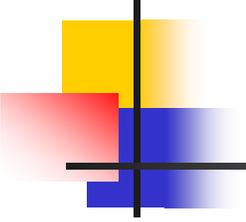


Recall and Precision of Validated Search Term

- Search term *recall* = 0.86, *precision* = 0.79
- Applied search term to HINTS data collection period to identify cancer-focused news articles between October 21, 2002 and April 13, 2003
- Each story was assumed to have a half-life of 1 day (Fan, 2003). Mean = 1.73/day.

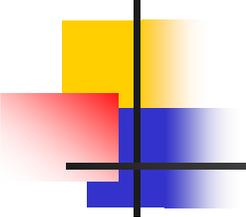
Variability in Cancer-Focused News Coverage





Independent and Dependent Variables

- Merged news coverage data to HINTS by date of interview
 - Cancer-focused news coverage in the week preceding the interview
- Cancer-related information seeking
 - 5.7% of the sample reported seeking cancer-related information in the past week

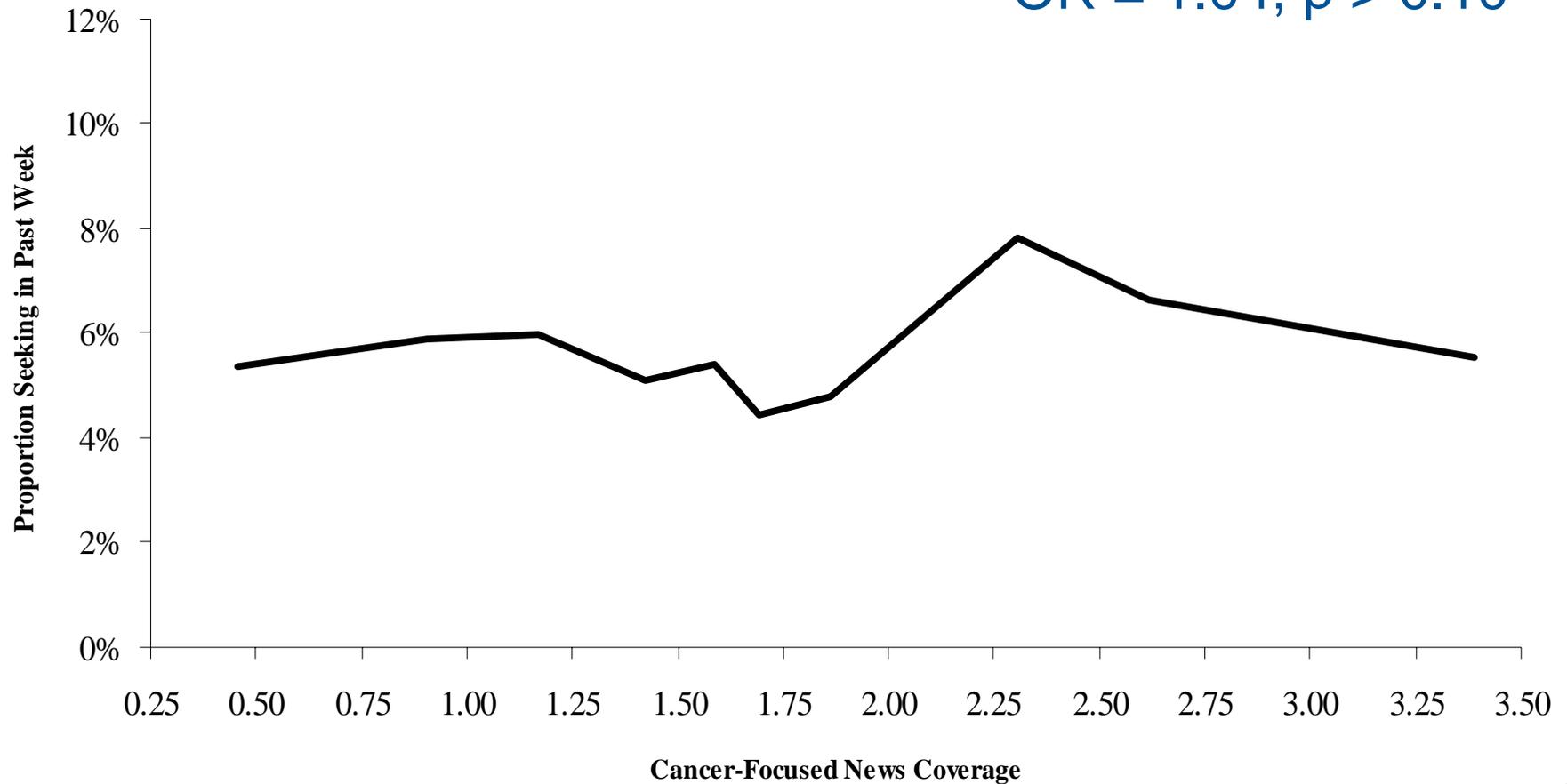


Analytic Approach

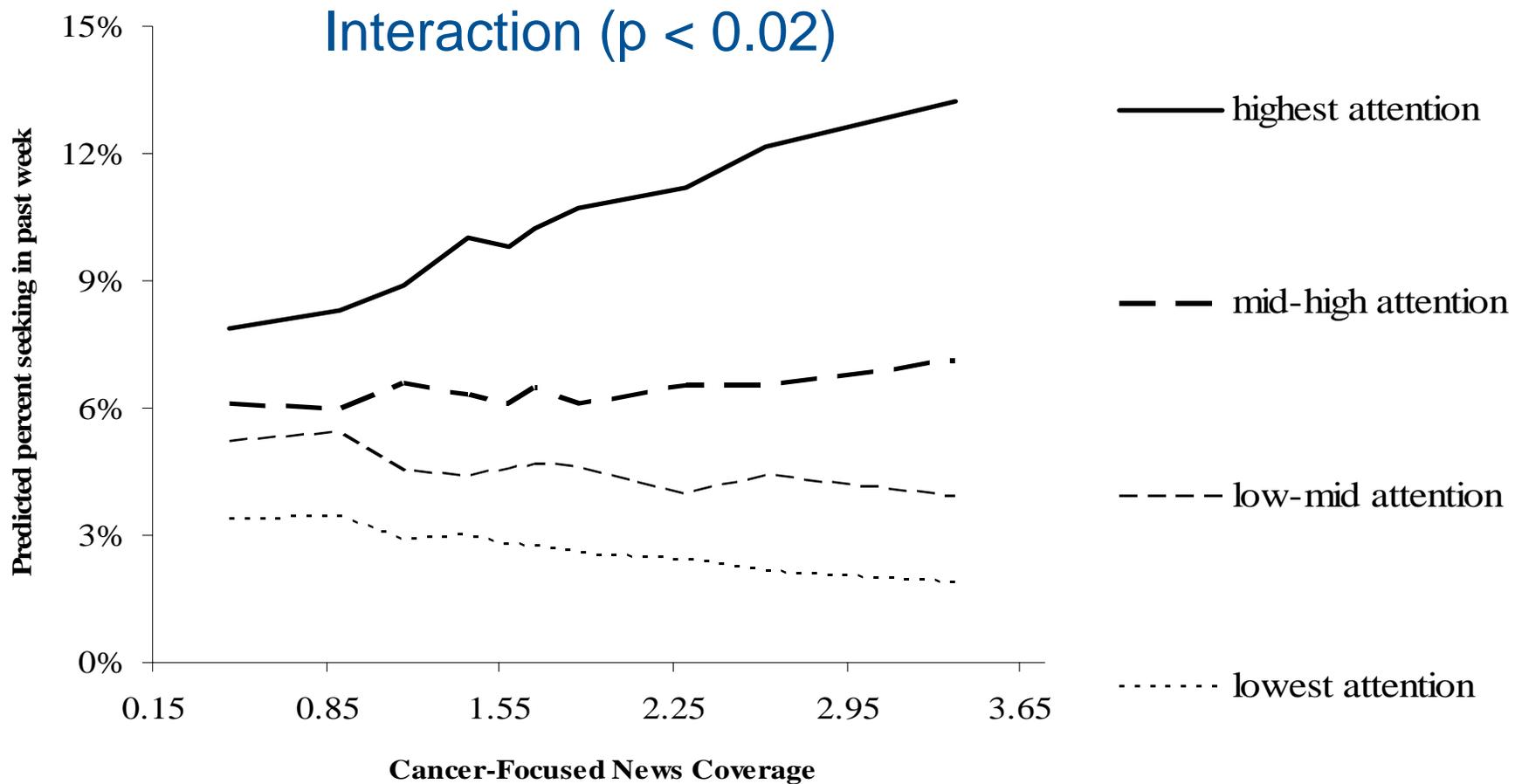
- Multivariate logistic regression assessed effect of news coverage on the odds of cancer information seeking in past week
 - Interactions to test moderating hypotheses
 - Covariates include age, gender, ethnicity, education, Internet access
- Plot model predicted values by IV's and moderators

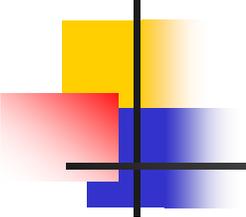
Overall Effects of News Coverage on Info Seeking

OR = 1.04, $p > 0.10$



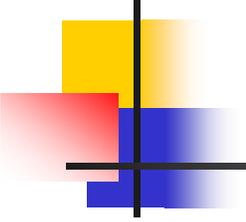
Moderating Effects of Attention to Health-Related News





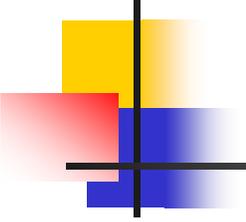
Discussion

- Effects of cancer-focused news coverage appear to extend beyond major news “events”
 - Previous research suggests that public health advocates have potential to affect the amount of cancer-focused coverage
- Nevertheless, effects only observed among those who already pay close attention to health-related news coverage
- Those who seek primarily use Internet to do so



Limitations

1. No evidence (yet) that seeking behavior leads to favorable health outcomes among general population
2. Relatively small proportion (5.7%) of survey respondents sought information in past week
 - Only six months of data collection, which may reduce variability in cancer news coverage
 - Effect was observed in spite of these limitations



Implications and Future Directions

- Potential for widened knowledge gap?
 - How to reach those who don't pay close attention to health-related news coverage?
- Many adults may require active efforts by health advocates to disseminate information relevant to prevention, screening & treatment
- What conditions lead people to seek health information, and how do people make sense of the complex health info environment?