ART OF MEDICINE
Horror PSA
Kelly Wang

Abstract
Public health messaging commonly happens with public service announcements (PSAs). Health screenings are often marketed using various incentives, such as odds presentation. This comic invites readers to consider aesthetic and ethical intersections of how odds might be presented—even exaggerated—to cultivate fear. When accompanied by implicit or explicit attribution of individual responsibility for one’s health risks or outcomes, PSAs or other health communications are not ethically neutral.

Figure. Fright Escalation

Have you gotten screened for breast cancer yet?

1 in 8 women in the U.S. will develop breast cancer in their lifetime.
Get screened now.
1 in 6 breast cancers occur in women ages 40-69.

You are turning 40. Get screened now. (Or else!)

Every 13 minutes a woman dies of breast cancer.

So remember... Or it's your own fault!

**Media**
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**Caption**
Drawing on cover art from many so-called pulp magazine covers, the comic traces an evolution in the woman’s expression and invites readers to consider whether growth in her fear experience is due to her cancer risk or to how her cancer risk is represented to her by health care. Recent concern about gaslighting1 in health care suggests the importance of how risk is represented in health messaging, whether coming from a
clinician or from a public service announcement. Ethically, we might wonder about the appropriateness of fear-based screening incentives. Whether and to what extent anyone should ever be regarded as clinically or ethically culpable for an illness is also worth interrogating.

References

Kelly Wang is a cartoonist, printmaker, and musician based in Chicago, Illinois.

Citation

DOI

Conflict of Interest Disclosure
The author(s) had no conflicts of interest to disclose.

The viewpoints expressed in this article are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views and policies of the AMA.