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Extension activity for the awareness and prevention of viral hepatitis in the city of Olinda: an experience report based on Charles Maguerez's Arch

Ação de extensão para conscientização e prevenção das hepatites virais no município de Olinda: um relato de experiência baseado no Arco de Charles Maguerez

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Abstract

Viral hepatitis, caused by hepatotropic viruses A, B, C, Delta, and E, presents a varied endemicity in the country, with high prevalence and infectivity. This experience report describes the experience of medical students from the Academic League of Gastroenterology in the Yellow July campaign outreach action. With the support of the Brazilian Society of Hepatology, the Olinda testing center, and the primary healthcare team from a Basic Health Unit, the students conducted vaccination, testing, and provided educational guidance on viral hepatitis. Moreover, they evaluated blood pressure and performed cardiopulmonary auscultation for the population. The action had a positive impact, achieving health promotion and raising awareness about the prevention of viral hepatitis.

Keywords: Viral hepatitis; Primary prevention; Vaccination; Health education

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Resumo

As hepatites virais, resultantes dos vírus hepatotrópicos A, B, C, Delta e E, apresentam endemicidade variada no país, com alta prevalência e infectividade. Este estudo relata a experiência de estudantes de medicina integrantes de uma Liga Acadêmica de Gastroenterologia na ação de extensão Julho Amarelo. Com o apoio da Sociedade Brasileira de Hepatologia, do Centro de Testagem de Olinda e da Equipe de Saúde de uma Unidade Básica de Saúde do município, os estudantes vacinaram, testaram e ofereceram orientações à população a respeito das hepatites virais, bem como promoveram outras medidas de saúde geral, como aferição de pressão arterial e ausculta cardiopulmonar. A ação teve impacto positivo alcançando a promoção de saúde e conscientizando quanto à prevenção das hepatites.

Palavras-chave: Hepatites virais; Prevenção primária; Vacinação; Educação em saúde

INTRODUCTION

Viral hepatitis, caused by the hepatotropic viruses A, B, C, Delta, and E, is transmitted via various routes, including enteric, fecal-oral, and parenteral, involving blood or other bodily fluids[1,2]. In Brazil, infections caused by hepatitis A, B, and C viruses are more relevant, and viral hepatitis ranks eighth among the leading causes of mortality; most deaths are due to hepatitis C[8].

Hepatitis B poses a major public health challenge in Brazil, with millions of people chronically infected and a high number of deaths related to chronic liver disease. Two nationwide studies, conducted in 2005 and 2021, aimed to estimate the prevalence of these infections; they found a high prevalence of hepatitis B in the North and Northeast regions of Brazil[3,4].

Although the vaccination has reduced the prevalence of hepatitis in some countries, the persistent high transmission in at-risk populations and in regions where control measures are difficult to implement makes chronic hepatitis B a significant public health concern in Brazil[5,6,7].

Considering the high endemicity of hepatitis B, prevention strategies, such as vaccination and effective curative treatment, can be concrete opportunities for controlling and eradicating hepatitis infections. Therefore, health education aimed at raising awareness about viral hepatitis is essential[9,10]. This study described the experience of members of the Academic League of Gastroenterology in the Yellow July campaign outreach initiative, focusing on the application of the Arch of Charles Maguerez as a methodological framework for implementing the intervention.

METHODS

This experience report was developed using the problematization methodology, based on the Arch of Charles Maguerez, which comprises five stages: observation of reality, identification of key points, theorization, formulation of solution hypotheses, and application to reality. The method

was adopted to provide an integrative development of the field activities of the students, which is directed at solving problems relevant to the population of Olinda city (Pernambuco, Brazil).

The intervention and methodology were decided through weekly communication between the students and healthcare professionals at the basic health unit. During the problematization stage, several issues were identified, including the high prevalence of hepatitis B and C, as well as low vaccination coverage. Key points included the lack of knowledge of the population about the diseases and the availability of vaccinations.

In the theorization stage, the best solutions to address the problems identified in the problematization stage were identified. Vaccination and rapid testing emerged as effective means of prevention and early detection, which directly influenced intervention planning by highlighting the need to ensure access to both services for the population.

Then, solution hypotheses were discussed in collaborative meetings, and the primary strategy chosen for implementation was health education for the population of Olinda city. Last, students applied the intervention, representing the final stage of the Arch of Charles Maguerez.

The intervention was supported by the Academic League of Gastroenterology at the Faculdade de Medicina de Olinda, the Brazilian Society of Hepatology, and the Olinda Testing Center, with the participation of the Academic League of Infectious Diseases from the same institution. The action occurred along the Olinda city seaside and at the Caixa D'Água basic health unit, aiming to reach as many people as possible and generate more effective and impactful results.

RESULTS

The intervention lasted two days and consisted of health education actions, prevention, testing, and general health promotion initiatives focused on viral hepatitis, targeting the population of Olinda city, Pernambuco.

On the first day, all participants involved in the initiative engaged in a conversation circle with the residents, discussing the importance of preventing, diagnosing, and treating viral hepatitis. In addition, rapid tests for hepatitis B and C, human immunodeficiency virus, and syphilis were offered, ensuring accessible, confidential, and prompt diagnosis for participants. Hepatitis B vaccination was also made available, reinforcing the importance of immunization.

To provide a general health evaluation for the participants, blood pressure and capillary blood glucose were assessed. The Academic League of Gastroenterology and the Academic League of Infectious Diseases also distributed sanitized fruits and educational pamphlets to encourage the population to undergo testing, receive vaccinations, and remain informed about health measures related to viral hepatitis. This initiative aimed to raise awareness and actively contribute to the eradication of viral hepatitis within the community.

On the second day, members of both academic leagues, in collaboration with the Olinda Testing Center and the Brazilian Society of Hepatology, conducted activities along the Olinda seaside, where a structure with a tent, tables, and chairs had been set up. The league members conducted several health promotion activities, including blood pressure monitoring, capillary glucose testing, cardiopulmonary auscultation, and rapid testing for hepatitis B and C. Health education was also promoted through the distribution of informational pamphlets, the presentation of banners, and explanations about hepatitis, its prevention, the importance of vaccination, and available treatments. Bottled water was distributed, and guidance on preventing dehydration was provided, considering the high temperatures and the time of day during which the activity was held.

CONCLUSION

Aiming to affirm and potentialize health education, the initiative aimed to prevent viral hepatitis by applying educational strategies, rapid testing, and hepatitis B vaccination. The strategy was effective in engaging the population and encouraging adherence to preventive measures and early diagnosis.

The partnership between academic leagues integrated diverse fields of knowledge to empower the population on the theme. The use of Arch of Charles Maguerez proved to be an appropriate methodology for the local context, increasing the effectiveness of the report and contributing to the identification of the difficulties and needs faced by the population of Olinda city, enabling the development of solutions aligned with the particularities of the target audience. The initiative conducted in this study emerges as a key model of supportive public health service, aimed at reducing the incidence of viral hepatitis and its complications.

Therefore, activities, such as the one described in this report, are relevant and needed to strengthen public knowledge about viral hepatitis, which can be prevented and diagnosed at an early stage.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

All authors participated equally in all stages of this report and agreed with the final version of the manuscript.

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