

Title: Pilot extension project for substance abuse education and prevention with impoverished at-risk adolescents

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ABSTRACT

In Brazil, there is a strong tendency for the increase of drug abuse, which seems to be more serious with cocaine subproducts, like crack and oxi, especially among adolescents. It has been shown that substance abuse starts between the age of 7 and 14 years-old, for inhalants and cocaine respectively. Therefore, it is extremely important to develop public programs of intervention on drug abuse information in developing countries. The objective of this project is to provide information about drug abuse to children and teenagers, in a dynamic and creative fashion, with several activities occurring mainly in public schools, in order to inform about the consequences of drug abuse.

Initially, a very poor community of the city of Rio de Janeiro, a slum known as "Complexo da Mare", which has among its inhabitants 30% of children up to 14 years-old, was selected to start the intervention program. In this area 67,7% of the youth are considered to be in risk situation, because they have not concluded the elementary school, and are not working or studying. Substance abuse by adolescents in this community is superior than on other areas of the city or in Brazil. Moreover, children of this community are exposed to different situations of violence, and 52% have been asked of how to get drugs in the neighborhood and drugs have been offered to 35% of kids.

Six public schools were selected in the community, and students were asked to answer the ASSIST questionnaire regarding the drug use frequency. Afterwards, children attending the elementary school participate in workshops about psychoactive substances alcohol, marijuana, cocaine, crack, among others. All the activities were organized by undergraduate students from Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, which were themselves originated from poor and violent communities. All the activities were adapted to the age and school segment. The information about substance abuse were also provided to children, teenagers, parents and school teachers.

In conclusion, this project allowed an important dialog between the University, through undergraduate students of popular origin, and poor communities of Rio de Janeiro, providing valuable information about drug abuse to children and adolescents at risk.