

## Experience Report

### Educational actions in dengue fever prevention: experiences and strategies with the elderly

*Ações educativas sobre dengue: experiências e estratégias com idosos*

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#### RESUMO

**Objetivos:** descrever atividades realizadas em serviço público ambulatorial para prevenção de dengue entre idosos. **Descrição do Caso:** o panorama epidemiológico da dengue é alarmante, constituindo problema de saúde pública. Os idosos compõem o grupo de maior risco para hospitalização e formas graves da doença, sendo imprescindíveis ações de educação em saúde para melhoria da conscientização quanto à necessidade do combate e prevenção da doença. Neste contexto, foi elaborado um projeto de Educação em Saúde, com estratégias de comunicação para conscientização sobre a problemática. Foram realizadas pelo grupo de aprimorandas em Gerontologia atividades como teatro interativo de fantoches, dinâmica sobre mitos e verdades, folder informativo, paródia, cartazes, capacitação de idosos, cuidadores e familiares, profissionais, funcionários e residentes de instituições de longa permanência para idosos (ILPI). Os materiais foram disponibilizados em versão impressa e digital. Foram capacitados 2.500 idosos e 350 profissionais, incentivados a multiplicarem informações e estimular adoção de medidas preventivas. As ações proporcionaram convívio intergeracional e empoderamento dos idosos, que ao serem capacitados tiveram oportunidade de exercer participação social e divulgar orientações para outros usuários. **Conclusão:** o projeto possibilitou a construção de conhecimentos através de ações educativas interativas que contribuíram para fortalecer a consciência individual e

coletiva, sensibilizar formadores de opinião para importância da comunicação/educação no combate à dengue, sendo enfatizada a responsabilidade social no resgate à cidadania numa perspectiva de que cada cidadão é responsável por si e por sua comunidade.

**DESCRITORES:** Dengue. Idoso. Prevenção de doenças. Educação em saúde.

## **ABSTRACT**

**Objective:** Describe the activities performed in a public outpatient clinic specialized in dengue fever prevention among the elderly. **Case report:** the epidemiological scenario of dengue fever is of concern, being characterized as a public health problem. The elderly are at the most risk for hospitalization and severe forms of the disease, thus health education activities are essential to improve awareness of the need to fight and prevent the disease. A Health Education project was thus created, with communication strategies to raise awareness on the subject. They were performed by a group of postgraduate students in Gerontology and included activities such as interactive puppet show, dynamics on myths and truths, informative folder, parody, posters, training senior citizens, caregivers and family members, internal and external health professionals, staff and residents of nearby long-term care facilities. The materials were available in print and digital versions. A total of 2,500 elderly individuals and 350 professionals were trained and encouraged to disseminate the information and stimulate the use of preventive measures. The actions provided intergenerational interaction and empowerment of the elderly, who, after being trained, had the opportunity to exercise social participation and provide recommendations to other users. **Conclusion:** the project enabled the construction of knowledge through interactive educational activities that contributed to strengthen the individual and collective awareness, raise the awareness of opinion leaders regarding the importance of communication/education in the fight against dengue, which emphasized social responsibility in rescuing citizenship rights from the perspective that each citizen is responsible for oneself and for the community.

**KEYWORDS:** Dengue. Aged. Disease prevention. Health education.

## **INTRODUCTION**

In 2015, a total of 404,636 cases of dengue were reported in the state of São Paulo until 04/22/2015. According to the Ministry of Health, the elderly have a 12-fold higher risk of death from dengue than any other age group.<sup>1-3</sup>

Dengue mortality profile among the 17,666 cases confirmed by serology in Puerto Rico showed a higher proportion of hospitalized elderly, as well as the development of the more severe forms of the disease.<sup>4</sup>

The epidemiological scenario of dengue is one of concern, constituting a public health problem. Considering this perspective, we emphasize the importance of educational actions of prevention, as well as the preparation of educative materials that may constitute the professional's practice of user education.

This report aimed at describing activities performed on an outpatient public service of Geriatrics and Gerontology for dengue prevention among the elderly. An Educational Health Project was carried out and communication strategies were developed to raise awareness on the subject.

## **CASE REPORT**

Based on the coordination of the Center for Studies on the Aging Process of Specialized Management in Gerontology of the service, actions were developed by postgraduate students from the Multidisciplinary Training Program in Gerontology, preceded by the training this team and complemented by the reading of scientific articles, searches in government sites and updated information on the incidence and development of the disease among the elderly.

During a two-month period, 2,500 elderly and 350 health professionals were trained, in addition to the indirect actions of online communication and replication by other professionals.

The group created an informative folder with accessible language and adapted to the user population, prioritizing images and recommendations in situations that favor the proliferation of the disease transmitter, main symptoms and disease prevention strategies, distributing it during the educational activities and also making it available at the website and fan page.

Illustrative posters were created, which were displayed in public spaces (murals, elevators, doorways), calling attention to symptoms, diagnosis, infection and prevention. Vibrant colors were prioritized, which included pictures and simple texts with large printing for easy viewing and reading by the elderly, considering visual and hearing difficulties.

Another form of educational activity was the interactive puppet show, considering the intergenerationality of households where the elderly usually live, with the possibility of replication of this activity in schools. The story simulated everyday situations of risk factors for mosquito proliferation, as well as the population's denial of the problem and the need to adopt preventive measures, starting at home. The theater is a methodological resource that can be used in educational activities, aimed at promoting elderly health, based on the learning of human values, constituting an excellent opportunity to exchange knowledge.<sup>5</sup>

A parody about dengue was created, using a song previously known by the elderly. The lyrics were adapted to the context of the song and theme, and recorded with the help of the service professionals, being made available to the Ministry of Health, which was later transported to other health units.

Considering the popular culture about the disease, the group created an interactive activity called "Myths and Truths", applied at different times to users, external professionals that were attending courses in gerontology at the unit, service employees, collaborators and residents of nearby long-term care facilities for the elderly (ILPI), aiming to replicate the actions. Based on several previously prepared statements, participants should indicate their opinion by means of red or green placards, followed by discussion and consensus among the participants.

Discussion constitutes a teaching and learning strategy of mutual communication without impediments for a consensus to be reached. Thus, it is possible to question one's own beliefs and admit that the parties are questioned by each other. It has a constructive, comprehensive and educational characteristic, encouraging reflection and changes in attitude.<sup>6</sup>

Aiming to expand the scope of actions, the group trained elderly volunteers of the service, who develop daily activities of welcoming and listening to users, relatives/caregivers, giving recommendations on the service routine, coexistence activities and projects in ILPI. Subsequently, the volunteers distributed informative leaflets during welcoming sessions, explaining the subject in colloquial language and using everyday situations to exemplify preventive measures.

The action plan aimed to empower and train users, families and caregivers, as well as internal and external health professionals, raising awareness for the need for changes in prevention attitudes and habits, highlighting the risk for the more aggressive form of the disease among the elderly, considering the morbidity profile and prevalence of chronic conditions in this age group.

## **CONCLUSION**

The interactive educational activities contributed to strengthen the individual and collective awareness, raise the awareness of opinion leaders regarding the importance of communication/education in the fight against dengue, which emphasized social

responsibility in rescuing citizenship rights from the perspective that each citizen is responsible for oneself and for the community.

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