

## Experience Report

### Structuring STD prevention work in the elderly: educational workshops

*Estruturando o trabalho de prevenção de Infecções Sexualmente Transmissíveis (IST)  
em idosos: oficinas educativas*

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Submitted on: 05/25/15

Accepted on: 09/30/15

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#### RESUMO

**Objetivos:** Relatar vivências educativas na orientação à população idosa sobre sexualidade e prevenção das infecções sexualmente transmissíveis (IST). **Descrição do caso:** Trata-se de relato de experiência do grupo de prevenção de IST noidoso em ambulatório especializado. A gerontologia educacional foi utilizada como metodologia na produção das oficinas educativas realizadas entre novembro de 2012 e dezembro de 2014 para idosos usuários do serviço. As oficinas intituladas “Tenda da Sabedoria”, “Baile dos Idosos” e “Roda de Conversa” abordaram a sexualidade do idoso, o conhecimento acerca da transmissão das doenças e formas de prevenção. As ações são sempre acompanhadas da distribuição de materiais educativos, preservativos bem como encaminhamentos e testagem para sorologia de Hepatites B e C, HIV e Sífilis. Observou-se a satisfação dos idosos, interesse e efetiva participação, ocorrendo aprendizado de forma simples e lúdica. Também foi possível identificar idosos interessados em multiplicar com seus pares e familiares o conhecimento construído. **Conclusões:** O processo educativo participativo promove o fortalecimento da rede de apoio ao idoso, tornando-se um canal ativo de comunicação entre equipe e usuário, oferecendo subsídios adequados ao trabalho de prevenção e tratamento das doenças.

**DESCRITORES:** Saúde do Idoso. Educação em Saúde. Prevenção de Doenças Transmissíveis. Promoção da Saúde.

#### ABSTRACT

**Objectives:** To report educational experiences counseling the elderly population about sexuality and prevention of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). **Case description:** This is a professional experience report of an STD prevention group in the elderly at a specialized clinic. Educational gerontology was used as a methodology in the production of workshops held from November/2012 to December/2014 available to service

users. The workshops entitled “Tenda da Sabedoria”, “Baile dos Idosos” and “Roda de Conversa” addressed the sexuality of the elderly, knowledge about transmission and how to prevent STDs. Actions are always accompanied by the distribution of educational material, condoms and referrals to undergo testing for Hepatitis B and C, HIV and syphilis. The group noticed the elderly’s satisfaction, interest and effective participation through learning in a simple and enjoyable way. It was also possible to identify the elderly interested in sharing the knowledge with peers and family members. **Conclusions:** The participatory educational process promotes strengthening of the elderly support network, enabling an active channel of communication between staff and users, offering adequate subsidies for prevention and treatment of diseases.

**KEYWORDS:** Health of the Elderly. Health Education. Communicable Disease Prevention. Health Promotion.

## INTRODUCTION

The incidence of HIV/AIDS in the population older than 50 years has shown an increase that has not been observed in any other age group, emerging as a challenge to Brazil for the implementation of public policies and strategies that ensure the achievement of preventive measures.<sup>1</sup>

Important factors corroborate the spread of the epidemic in the elderly, among them a greater chance of contracting Sexually-Transmitted Diseases (STDs) due to the higher biological vulnerability, demystification of sexual activity among the elderly, access to drugs for erectile disorders and increased survival of HIV carriers. Reports of incorrect information on STD modes of transmission and prevention produced by the popular imagination are also common.<sup>2</sup>

The present study, carried out in the southern region of Brazil, verified the existence of gaps regarding knowledge about HIV/AIDS in the elderly from social groups, emphasizing the importance of implementing educational health programs for this age group.<sup>3</sup>

The objective of this study is to report educational experiences while providing information to the elderly population about sexuality and prevention of STDs.

## CASE REPORT

This is an experience report of an STD prevention group, having as target population the elderly population treated at the Instituto Paulista de Geriatria e Gerontologia (IPGG). The Institute aims to plan and develop promotion, prevention and

specialized outpatient care actions directed to the elderly population on the east zone of the city of São Paulo, as well as produce and disseminate knowledge in Geriatrics and Gerontology.

The creation of educational workshops, carried out from November 2012 to December 2014, used educational gerontology as methodology, aimed at the practice of teaching tasks directed to the elderly and is based on educational programs geared to their needs, considering the characteristics of this age group.<sup>4</sup>

The STD prevention group was created in November 2011, due to the need of addressing this issue with service users. A team of 12 professionals consisting of nurses and nurse assistants, social worker, educator, psychologist, volunteers and psychology interns was created. Training workshops are sporadically promoted for primary care health professionals to work with the issue.<sup>5,6</sup> The group appreciates the acceptance of others without judgment of moral standards to allow therapeutic communication and build health knowledge compatible with the success of the work.

Based on a model workshop experienced by IPGG professionals presented by a theater group in the Latin American Congress on HIV/AIDS (2012), it became apparent the need for inclusion of playful and sensory actions to increase the adherence of the elderly to educational activities. The group then adapted the first educational workshop entitled "Tent of Wisdom" (*Tenda da Sabedoria*), followed by two workshops: "Ball of the Elderly" (*O baile dos idosos*) and "Conversation Wheel" (*Roda de conversa*).<sup>7</sup>

The "Tent of Wisdom" simulated a maze with different chambers, consisting of four stages: data and pictures of attractive individuals, liquids that simulate bodily secretions, tactile sensitivity of male and female condoms and mirror reflective activity, where the elderly find themselves responsible for their bodies and health status. The elderly also had the opportunity to have their questions answered.

The educational workshop "Ball of the Elderly" simulated social interactions and, symbolically, the experienced sexual intercourses. The activity aimed to educate the elderly about risk factors for STDs, contamination range and importance of condom use for prevention.

The "Conversation Wheel" used cards with predefined words on the subject, about which each elderly was free to express their knowledge. It was a dynamic workshop that led to reflection and allowed flexibility in directing the activity.

The workshops addressed elderly sexuality, knowledge about STD mode of transmission and prevention. The actions were accompanied by the distribution of

educational material, condoms, referrals and testing for Hepatitis B and C, HIV and syphilis, contributing to early diagnosis.

Regarding the quantitative data on group sessions, from November 2012 to December 2014, each workshop had an average of 30 participants, totaling approximately 560 elderly individuals. The group also distributed 5,700 condoms and referred 518 elderly to serological tests.

Successful partnerships were established, which are essential to expand the scope of the developed actions, with Centro de Testagem e Aconselhamento (Testing and Counseling Center - CTA) in Sao Miguel Paulista municipality in São Paulo and with Centro de Referência e Treinamento (Reference and Training Center – CRT) of the STD/AIDS Health Secretariat of São Paulo.

At the end of the activities the elderly were asked to evaluate the significance of the workshops and reported enthusiasm, satisfaction, interest and effective participation by learning through simple and fun activities. Based on such experiences, we identified elderly individuals interested in multiplying their knowledge with peers and family members.

The aging process requires coordination and training of professionals, promoted by interventions such as campaigns, public policies, researches and health education.<sup>8</sup>

Counseling actions and increased access to qualified information encourage an active attitude of the population regarding their own health. The participatory educational process promotes the strengthening of the support network for elderly individuals, turning it into an active channel of communication, offering adequate subsidies for the work of prevention and treatment of diseases.

The organization of health professionals into a team supports the carrying out of regular activities, becoming a reference for collaborators and users regarding the STD prevention subject.

The greatest difficulty in organizing and planning educational workshops is the need for the contribution of different fields of knowledge and consequent participation of the multidisciplinary team in the STD prevention group in the elderly. It is a challenge to alert health professionals to the importance of the subject in the context of elderly health.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Education is the responsibility of all health professionals. Educational activities must be planned and based on sustainability prospects of prevention programs.

The strategy of educational workshops to develop the subject of DSTs in the elderly through active participation and the presented reports was a positive one.

The continuity of the group's actions will be performed by carrying out surveys to detect the prevalence of STDs in the elderly in the community and continuous assessment of the effectiveness of educational workshops, as well as the expansion of activities for the elderly in the primary care network in other locations and life contexts.

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