

Title: Generation of healthy behavior to prevent influenza AH1N1 infection and complications in people through the use of significant learning

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Context and setting: In Peru, where many institutions develop educational programs in their communities on prevention of infectious diseases, there are many informative campaigns about its prevention but there are very few data about the impact of them. The new Influenza AH1N1 pandemic represents an excellent opportunity to test the impact of these programs in communities.

Why the idea was necessary: We organized an evaluation on the impact of educational activities for the generation of healthy behavior in communities for the prevention of infection and complications of influenza AH1N1, through the use of active educational methodologies to generate significant learning in the people. It is supposed that this kind of learning would have more impact on people and lead to the generation of healthy behavior.

What was done: The project included training sessions for medical students on ways of generating significant learning in people through workshops and role play. In communities we organized educational and assistant activities calling people to participate freely in workshops, role play sessions, and informative games about the influenza AH1N1 clinical picture, and how to prevent transmission and complications. We also held sessions on healthy nutrition for the family. At the start of activities we asked people to fill out a survey about influenza AH1N1 and a chart about family dynamics and support when facing difficult situations, manifestations of violence in the community, and where they look for assistance when they get sick.

Evaluation of results and impact: Initial results indicate that 24% had good knowledge of the disease, but more than half failed in the survey. It is interesting to note that 43% believe that antibiotics were useful for treating viral diseases and 52% considered that a competent immune system could help eradicate this viral disease. More than 85% of participants were women, 18–50 years old, with complete high-school instruction. 24% of participants stated that they never had support from their families when facing difficult situations, 33% sometimes, and 38% always. Around 61% indicated manifestations of physical violence in the community, especially by gang activity. Almost 30% of participants indicated that they go to the grocery store or self-medicate when feel sick, 10% went to see the medicine man, but 71% look for assistance in the official health services.

At the end of the activity we asked people to show us what they had learned, through drawings by the children helped by their parents, and through completing the survey again, but we had too few to conclude any significant learning. We plan to organize another activity near Christmas time and evaluate the impact of our intervention by asking them to complete a similar survey and compare the results with those obtained in the first survey.

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