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Training of community health agents for active search of patients with viral hepatitis: experience report



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Background

In Brazil, the primary public health has been restored to the Family Health Strategy, in which neighborhoods have the Family Health Teams composed of multidisciplinary health professionals and community health workers.

Community health agents are technicians on health, responsible for visiting families, giving information on health, performing active search of more prevalent diseases, and referral of people to health facilities. For this reason, it is essential that these professionals are trained on viral hepatitis.

Training of community health agents should consider local realities and actions should be planned involving health professionals, managers, teachers, researchers and civil society, so that the content addressed can meet the real needs.

The objective of this project was to train community health agents on viral hepatitis to become multipliers of this knowledge.

Methods

The project was performed in Victoria, capital of State of Espírito Santo, Brazil, in 2012. It was carried out by a partnership among a non-governmental non-profit organization; teachers of university courses; the State Department of Health of Espírito Santo, the Municipal Department of Health of Vitória.

According to the municipal health program of regionalization, Vitória is divided into 6 health regions. To facilitate the participation of the community health agents, 6 trainings were performed in places easily accessible to professionals of these health regions, in different days (FIG. 1).



Fig. 1: Vitória's Map of Health Regions

Monitoring instruments:

- attendance lists;
- evaluation forms.

Before the training, Community health agents answered questionnaires about viral hepatitis to evaluate their knowledge on these diseases.

Results

When the project was done Vitória had a total of 353 community health agents divided into six areas according to the health regionalization map.

➤ 274 community health agents were trained I (77.40% of the total).

The results of questionnaires completed before the lectures showed the need for training on viral hepatitis to increase awareness of these professionals about the disease.

Conclusion

It is essential that training and updates on viral hepatitis are included in the continuing education of community health agents, to increase prevention and active search for early diagnosis.

Partnerships among health public departments, universities, and third sector are effective for these actions. Knowledge gaps about VH among these professionals indicate that this issue must be addressed continuously.

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