



Problem-based learning as a strategy for promoting knowledge about sexuality: An experience report

Aprendizado baseado em problema como estratégia para promoção de conhecimento sobre sexualidade: Relato de experiência

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ABSTRACT

OBJECTIVE: To understand how complex the concept of sexuality is and how necessary it is to understand it. **EXPERIENCE REPORT:** The activity was carried out in a War Shooting Section, where medical students applied the problem-based learning methodology with the institution's shooters as a strategy for discussing sexuality with these adolescents. **DISCUSSION:** The use of this methodology to create a horizontal discussion between medical students and adolescents helps both the professional practice of future doctors and the reflection of adolescents on their sexuality and its repercussions. **CONCLUSION:** The implementation of a methodology normally used in the academic field in a community context helped both directors and target audience to expand their knowledge on the subject, seeking to improve the approach to the subject within the context of health education.

Keywords: Medical education, Sexuality, Teaching.

1 INTRODUCTION

The concept of health education has changed, encompassing an increasingly broad and widespread context, in an attempt to establish more and more links in society and enable the most different individuals to think of health no longer as the absence of disease, but as a compendium of physical, social and psychological well-being¹. In this context, society benefits from health education policies in various spheres, including the adolescent population².

According to the Statute of the Child and Adolescent, adolescence can be understood as the period of life between the ages of twelve and eighteen³. This phase is surrounded by various changes in social roles, bonds, hormonal and psycho-affective changes, and is a complex time of considerable apprehension².



The onset of sexual activity, which most of the time also takes place during this period, makes it even more difficult for adolescents to understand the various nuances involved in this practice, as well as the responsibility for carrying it out in an unsafe and inadvertent manner⁴.

In addition to the many changes that take place during this phase, which in itself poses difficulties, there is the fact that many of the doubts that adolescents have go unanswered. The obscurity that the field of hebiatrics still faces in Brazil, where doctors specializing in the area are few and far between and medical awareness campaigns on adolescent health aspects are still scarce, impose further obstacles at this stage of life.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), 220,000 adolescents become pregnant every day in the world, with Brazil being one of the countries that contributes most to this figure⁴. From another perspective, the WHO also reveals that almost 1 million new cases of Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) appear every day in the world⁴. This scenario raises concerns about pertinent issues at the beginning of sexual activity, such as teenage pregnancy and the transmission of STIs within this age group.

This report aims to reflect on the importance of health education in the context of sexuality for adolescents, and to correlate the relevance of educational initiatives by the medical profession for this age group, from the perspective of an activity carried out in a discipline of the Medicine course at a university in the interior of São Paulo.

2 EXPERIENCE REPORT

This is a report on the experience of fourth-year medical students from a private university in **the interior of São Paulo**. The activity was carried out as part of a health education course in a War Shooting Section in the same municipality, where the students were able to answer questions and discuss the topic of sexuality with the institution's shooters.

At first, the students and shooters were divided into groups, so that each student was responsible for the dynamic with a group of ten to fifteen shooters. After this stage, the members of each group gathered in a circle to begin the dynamic. The medical student then coordinated a discussion on various topics related to sexuality, raising questions and seeking to understand the shooters' understanding of each topic.

The topics were separated into: general sexuality, teenage pregnancy, and sexually transmitted infections. Questions were asked by the student to direct the discussion based on the table:

Table 1. Questions asked by the student to guide the discussion

Theme	Questions
General sexuality	What is sexuality?
	Are sex and sexuality the same thing?
Teenage pregnancy	What contraceptive methods do you know?
	If you found out today that you were going to be a father, how would that affect your life?
	How do you think a pregnancy now would affect your partner's life?
Sexually Transmitted Infections	What sexually transmitted infections do you know about?
	How do you avoid these sexually transmitted infections?

Over the course of the discussion, other pertinent questions arose and further enhanced the discussion in the groups.

. The responses were extremely varied. On the subject of "Sexuality in general", a small proportion of the shooters demonstrated real knowledge of the concept of sexuality and how it differs from the concept of sex; another proportion demonstrated confusion between the concepts, and a larger proportion said they didn't know the difference between the concepts.

On the second topic, "Pregnancy in adolescence", the young people demonstrated knowledge about the use of condoms and reported knowing little about other contraceptive methods. Some were also curious about the effectiveness of oral contraceptives, transdermal contraceptive patches and the Intrauterine Device (IUD). With regard to the repercussions that a pregnancy could have on their lives at that time, many of them were concerned about the financial aspect, some showed concern about their parents' reaction to the possible event, and most were solicitous about their partner in the hypothetical scenario. However, many of the shooters did not understand the biological and behavioral changes that a possible pregnancy could bring about in their partner.

With regard to the third topic, "Sexually Transmitted Infections", most of the shooters showed knowledge of the possible agents that could cause an infectious condition, but only a small number showed knowledge of the symptoms and repercussions that these diseases could cause. In addition, many of them said they were afraid of becoming infected with a sexually transmitted infectious agent, but they had doubts about what the safest forms of protection were and how they could identify a clinical picture after sexual activity.

In a second moment, all the shooters gathered in a courtyard where the students and the supervising teacher gave a presentation, answering the questions raised during the discussion and those that arose during the course of it. The above topics were covered in a way that was understandable to all the shooters and they were also given guidance on how to practice safe sexual



activity, avoiding unwanted pregnancies and infections, as well as discussing the role of responsibility that adolescents have with this practice, its consequences and the need for mutual accountability with the partner and the necessary shelter for the couple.

It was also explained how adolescents could be tested for sexually transmitted diseases within the Primary Health Care Network and the importance of self-care and persistence in health education.

3 DISCUSSION

It's worth understanding how complex the concept of sexuality is and how necessary it is to understand it. According to Freud, sexuality is something innate to every individual, a substantial energy that also helps shape the psyche and behavior⁵. Adolescents like the shooters mentioned in the activity are undergoing a unique range of bodily and psychological changes and an understanding of this concept is *sine qua non* for understanding themselves⁶. However, the experiment showed that this concept is still poorly developed in these adolescents and therefore shows how necessary sexuality education is for this population.

Sexuality is a demand of hepatology⁷, and we saw how the precarious knowledge of adolescents in a small sample on the subject makes the practice of health education increasingly important. The experience of this activity was doubly important: one for the shooters (target audience) and the other for the students (participants).

For the students, the knowledge of the specific demands that exist in the reality of this population provided a more concrete reflection on the mentality of the city's adolescents, and thus broadened the opportunities for intervention that can and could be made with the community and with their future patients. According to Rios and Caputo, the experience is fundamental within the medical training curriculum so that future professionals can reflect on the theory studied and adapt therapeutic projects to more specific demands⁸. Therefore, the activity proved to be relevant to building the careers of the future doctors taking part.

The experience was also beneficial for the shooters, as the opportunity to answer their questions helped to build and improve their self-care⁹. The questions asked during the activity aroused curiosity and questions that the participants may not have thought of before. This construction of knowledge in groups based on situations is one of the premises of the *Problem Based Learning* methodology, used in many medical courses around the world and now placed in the context of health education for the community in a fruitful way¹⁰.



The presentation at the end was also relevant from the point of view of both groups of participants. The students were able to hone their public speaking skills in a language accessible to young people, as well as providing reflection for the shooters, who were able to understand the technical aspects involved in the topic of sexuality and, on the other hand, were able to reflect on their actions, seeking to prevent unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections, and broaden their responsibility for the aspects involved in their future and that of their partners⁶.

4 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

It is suggested that the opportunity to verify in practice the demands of adolescents on the subject of sexuality was essential to expand the students' knowledge of the reality of this population and, on the other hand, to broaden their own knowledge of hebiatrics in the medical curriculum.

It was possible to understand the importance of health education for the lives of adolescents, implementing self-care and creating responsibility. To this end, the Problem-Based Learning tool also proved useful in a non-academic context, demonstrating how new strategies for applying health education can lead to satisfactory results for those carrying out the activities and those to whom they are proposed.

In this way, the implementation of a methodology normally used in the academic field in a community context helped both the directors and the target audience to broaden their knowledge of the subject, seeking to improve the approach to the topic within the context of health education.

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