



MIRT 2003 ABSTRACTS

Evaluating the Efficiency and Impact of Murals in Disseminating Women's Rights for Pueblos of Oaxaca, Mexico

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For decades, murals have been an important tool for the dissemination of information to communities due to their graphic and permanent nature. At times the message the artist intends to depict is not what the audience perceives. Several murals have been painted in the rural pueblos of southern Mexico to convey women's rights. This investigation aims to discover if, and how much of, the artists' intended message the community perceived. In addition, this investigation aims to discover what actions were motivated to take place as a result of seeing the murals (i.e. how much of an impact did the message have on the community).

Questionnaires and in-person interviews were conducted with both the artist and selectively sampled members of the community. Results were recorded, qualified, and quantified for purposes of pueblo comparison. The murals where the community perceived most of the intended message were those murals were those with clear, precise phrases in addition to unambiguous graphics. The most impactful murals were those that concentrated on conveying a few rights as opposed to many. An overall suggestion for improvement on all murals is the use of universal symbols in the mural to better target the illiterate population.

A Needs Assessment of the Professional services provided at Grupo Rosario Castellanos, a women's health organization in Oaxaca, Mexico

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This study was a process evaluation that will be used to aid in making executive decisions on how to execute the remainder of the Casa de la Mujer Project at Grupo Rosario Castellanos. Existing data were used to develop specific indicators to assess the overall progress of the Casa de la Mujer Project's first three months of implementation, April 1st through June 30th of 2003, and to make comparisons of the service providers' (1 lawyer, 1 homeopathic doctor, and 3 psychologists) contribution to this progress. The indicators were solicitations, first appointments, follow-up appointments, highest level of educational attainment, service hours attended, and amount of donations received. The subjects included in this study were those who solicited aid during the 3-month period. Of the 110 persons seeking services during the time frame, the majority sought legal and psychological aid. Although legal and psychological aid was most sought out, a higher percentage of solicitants who actually attended their first appointments was observed for the lawyer and the homeopathic doctor. Of the 110 solicitants, only six clients had attended two or more follow-up appointments. From a total of 108 solicitants observed, over 33% had attended an institute of higher learning (university or master's level). The lawyer provided about 39% of all service hours provided and one of the psychologists provided 25.6% of the service hours. The highest total donation amount was collected for the services provided by the lawyer who was followed by one of the psychologists. Finding the basic information, such as, how many solicitants, number of first appointments attended, number of clients who received follow-up appointments provides an estimation of how many to expect for the remainder of the project and provides incentive to strive for much higher client retention rate. Attempting different methods to encourage or help individuals soliciting aid to also schedule an appointment, attend their appointment and to continue with follow-up appointments would help increase retention rates. In finding the highest level of educational attainment it may be inferred that the majority of the population served had attained a higher level of education. Promotional efforts should attempt to focus on the less educated, which are more needy of these services. The number of total hours served and the amounts in donations received, show that the donations received are not enough to cover certain essential costs. Different techniques in collecting donations should be applied or a low fixed fee should be required so that these costs will be covered and so that these essential services can continue to be provided.

The Use of Antibiotics and the Prevalence of *N. gonorrhoeae* in the Population of Female Sex Workers in Peru – A Preliminary Report

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Background: The use and self-administration of antibiotics is common in Peru. The pattern of antibiotic use in female sex workers (FSW) has not been well evaluated. Frequent antibiotic use could be impacting the prevalence of *N. gonorrhoeae* (NG).

Objective: To describe the patterns of antibiotic use and its correlation with the prevalence of NG in FSW in ten Peruvian cities, which are targets for the Urban Community Randomization Trial of STI Prevention.

Methods: A mobile team consisting of a health worker and a peer-educator enrolled FSW from sex work venues in each of the participating cities. A questionnaire and a photo album of antibiotics were employed to gather data in conjunction with self-collected vaginal samples for further NG PCR testing. The photo album contained 28 images of 7 antibiotics available in the Peruvian market, especially those that effectively treat an NG infection with a single dose.

Results: In a 4 week period between July and August 2003, 720 completed questionnaires were collected, with an average of 72 enrolled participants per city and an observed NG prevalence of 7.7%. Overall, 212 participants (29%) had used antibiotics in the previous month, but the range varied widely among the cities (5.3% to 79.3%). Of 156 antibiotic users, 53% had taken the medication without a medical prescription (most commonly advised by a pharmacy clerk or by self-indication). The use of antibiotics increased significantly with age ($p = 0.002$ by linear by linear association) and the NG prevalence did not. There was no association found between the use of quinolones or third-generation cephalosporins and a lower prevalence of NG.

Conclusions: The use of antibiotics in the previous month among FSW was found to be high and it increased with age. An association between lower prevalence of NG and use of quinolones or third-generation cephalosporins could not be demonstrated, though the evaluation of this hypothesis is still ongoing.

Risk Factors of Physical Family Violence in Lima, Peru

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Objective: Family violence is a vicious practice present in all societies. Data about its occurrence and associated risks are scarce in Latin America. The aim of this study is to identify characteristics and risk factors associated with physical family violence in Lima, Peru.

Study methods: An anonymous interview was completed by 308 adults who were randomly recruited from the Social Service Department at Hospital Nacional Dos de Mayo. The interview included questions regarding history of family violence, approval and acceptability of violence, and questions about relevant socio-demographic information.

Results: Physical family violence was found in 28% of the study population. Of those who reported physical family violence in their homes in the last twelve months, 22% were aggressors, and 10% were victims.

Discussion: The results of this study highlight the need for more family violence research in Peru, as in the rest of Latin America, and the world. Violence knows no borders, thus it is the responsibility of the global community to learn more about this public health problem in order to inform appropriate interventions.

Adolescent Sexuality in Urban and Rural Mexico: Knowledge, Behavior and Access to Information

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Objective: To assess sociodemographic characteristics and self-reported sexual knowledge, behavior, and access to information among Mexican adolescents.

Methods: A sample 12,764 adolescents, 11-19 years old, attending 352 public junior and high schools in Morelos, Mexico, completed a self-administered questionnaire on sexual knowledge and behavior from September 1998 through June 1999.

Results: The sample was composed of 44% male and 56% female students with a median age of 14.1 years. More students lived in urban and semi-urban areas (60%) than in rural areas (40%). Students had a greater understanding of male reproductive biology than female with older students and those from urban schools more knowledgeable. Females were more aware of contraception methods than males, reporting greater familiarity with cervical mucus methods (94%) than with condoms (13%). Rural and younger adolescents had greater knowledge of contraception than did urban and older students. Less than 20% of students could accurately distinguish STDs from a general list of diseases and very few could identify risky behaviors for HIV/AIDS. Overall, 14% reported being sexually active. Mean reported age at first intercourse was 13.6 years for males and 14.4 years for females. When asked if they felt they were at risk of contracting an STD, 86% reported either no or little possibility. Students overwhelmingly trusted school materials most for obtaining information on sexual matters (82%) over television, movies or magazines.

Discussion: School based intervention programs are needed to increase sexual knowledge and reduce the risk of STDs and HIV in adolescents in Mexico.

Reducing Stigma Surrounding HIV/AIDS: Evaluation of an Educational Program for Health Professionals in Mexico

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Objective: To evaluate changes in knowledge and attitudes about HIV/AIDS following an educational program designed for health professionals in Cuernavaca, Mexico.

Methods: Thirty-one participants in the “Multidisciplinary HIV/AIDS Diploma Course: Surveillance, Prevention and Care” offered by the Instituto Nacional de Salud Publica (National Public Health Institute) in Mexico completed questionnaires on their knowledge and attitudes toward HIV/AIDS before and after completing the course in July 2003. Questions on knowledge were answered as true/false and attitudes were measured on a four-point Likert scale. Changes in scores were evaluated using paired t-tests.

Results: Participants were an average of 39 old and 64% were women. All had college or professional degrees. Overall, knowledge of HIV transmission was high with 10 of 15 (67%) questions answered on the pre-test correctly by 90% or more of participants. Four questions (27%) showed an increase of knowledge by 10% or more participants on the post-test. These included information on transmission of HIV from drinking cups, masturbation, oral sex, and mother-infant transmission via breastfeeding. Eight of 19 (42%) questions regarding attitudes showed significant increases in tolerance toward individuals with HIV/AIDS ($p \leq .05$). Greatest changes included less agreement regarding prohibition of HIV-positive women from having children, obligatory testing of gay men and commercial sex workers, prohibition of prostitution, and more agreement regarding governmental policy on antiretroviral treatment and permitting HIV-positive surgeons to operate on their patients.

Discussion: A four-week training course can reduce stigma surrounding HIV/AIDS by changing attitudes as well as increasing knowledge in health professionals in Mexico.

Acceptability of the Female Condom among Young, Heterosexual Women in Lima, Peru: A Preliminary Analysis

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Background: Prevalence of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV, remains high among young, heterosexual women in Peru. Correct use of the male condom (MC) is the most effective way to prevent STIs during intercourse; however, MC use in this population is low. The female condom (FC) is an alternative method that offers adequate prevention against STIs and unintended pregnancy. This study evaluates the short-term acceptability of the FC among young, heterosexual women in Lima, Peru.

Methods: Women were invited to learn about the FC through clinic- and school-based recruitment in Lima. Those who were between 18-29 years of age, sexually active, and gave consent to participate were enrolled in the study (final N=150). Participants received an orientation and individualized training on the insertion and use of the FC, and counseling on sexual negotiation. Standardized questionnaires were used to collect demographic data, sexual history, and evaluate the acceptability of the FC. Participants were given 6 FCs and evaluated after 1 month. These results represent the preliminary analysis of the first 53 complete observations. Final analysis is still in process.

Results: 87% of the participants were single and mainly students at post-secondary educational institutions (81%), with a mean age of 21.2 years. 83% of these women found FC insertion to be easy or very easy, 87% said the condom was easy or very easy to remove, and 86% felt it was comfortable or very comfortable to use. 87% of the participants were willing to continue to use the FC if it were to become available to them. 57% of the participants preferred the FC to the MC, while 32% preferred either of the two methods.

Conclusions: Though preliminary, these study results suggest the availability of the FC may improve opportunities to increase women's protection against STIs and unintended pregnancy. There is a need to study long-term FC use in this population and evaluate if the availability of both the male and female condoms increase the prevalence of protected sex.