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## CASE REPORT ARTICLE

### PREVENTION OF MISUSE OF PSYCHOACTIVE SUBSTANCES AMONG CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

#### PREVENÇÃO DO USO INDEVIDO DE SUBSTÂNCIAS PSICOATIVAS ENTRE CRIANÇAS E ADOLESCENTES

#### PREVENCIÓN DEL USO INDEBIDO DE SUSTANCIAS PSICOACTIVAS EN NIÑOS Y ADOLESCENTES

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#### ABSTRACT

**Objective:** reporting the experience of nursing students from a university extension project involving educational activities for prevention of the misuse of drugs among children and adolescents. **Method:** a descriptive study of experience report type, which focused on the description and discussion workshops presented for elementary school students I and II of public schools in two stages: theater and gymkhana. The research project was approved by the Research Ethics Committee, under the CAAE 06601012.8.0000.5207. **Results:** it was observed that the students' involvement with the dynamics and the methodology used, pointing out that the language and content of the workshops favored their understanding. **Conclusion:** it was noted the success of activities, with significant performance of the participants in the dynamics and effectiveness of theater as a method for the theme of communication. **Descriptors:** Children; Primary Prevention; Disorders Related to the Use of Substances.

#### RESUMO

**Objetivo:** relatar a experiência de acadêmicos de Enfermagem a partir de um projeto de extensão universitária envolvendo atividades educativas para a prevenção do uso indevido de substâncias psicotrópicas entre crianças e adolescentes. **Método:** estudo descritivo do tipo relato de experiência, o qual enfocou a descrição e discussão de oficinas apresentadas para alunos do Ensino Fundamental I e II de escolas públicas em dois momentos: teatro e gincana. O projeto de pesquisa foi aprovado pelo Comitê de Ética em Pesquisa, sob o CAAE 06601012.8.0000.5207. **Resultados:** observou-se o envolvimento dos alunos com a dinâmica e a metodologia utilizadas, apontando que a linguagem e o conteúdo das oficinas favoreceram sua compreensão. **Conclusão:** constatou-se o êxito das atividades, com significativo desempenho dos participantes nas dinâmicas e a eficácia do teatro como método para a comunicação do tema. **Descritores:** Criança; Prevenção Primária; Transtornos Relacionados ao uso de Substâncias.

#### RESUMEN

**Objetivo:** presentar la experiencia de los estudiantes de enfermería de un proyecto de extensión universitaria que involucra actividades educativas para la prevención del uso indebido de drogas entre los niños y adolescentes. **Método:** un estudio descriptivo de informe de experiencia, que se centró en la descripción y discusión talleres presentados por los estudiantes de primaria I y II de las escuelas públicas; en dos etapas: el teatro y la gymkhana. El proyecto de investigación fue aprobado por el Comité de Ética en la Investigación, bajo el CAAE 06601012.8.0000.5207. **Resultados:** se observó la implicación del alumnado con la dinámica y la metodología utilizada, señalando que el lenguaje y el contenido de los talleres favorecieron su comprensión. **Conclusión:** se observó el éxito de las actividades, con un rendimiento significativo de los participantes en la dinámica y la eficacia del teatro como un método para el tema de la comunicación. **Descriptores:** Niños; La Prevención Primaria; Trastornos Relacionados al Uso de Sustancias.

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## INTRODUCTION

Psychotropic drugs act on the central nervous system (CNS) causing increased or decreased brain activity, bringing effects such as changes in behavior, mood and cognition, resulting in chemical dependency that tends to worsen with the continuous use.<sup>1</sup> You may notice social damage associated with drug use, like: traffic accidents, poor academic and professional performance. In addition to risk factors for violence such as fights, murders within the family and outside the family space and practices of illicit acts.<sup>2</sup>

According to the World Health Organization, 2,5 million people die each year due to alcohol consumption, being responsible for the deaths of approximately 320.000 youth and adolescents annually. The world average is around 9% of deaths in the age group between 15 and 29 years old, according to the WHO report (WHO, 2013). Epidemiological studies show that the initiation of psychotropic substances is increasingly early among adolescents, which can cause inestimable losses in their life. According to the Sixth National Survey on Psychotropic Drug Use among Primary and Middle School Students of the Public Education Network in 17 Brazilian capitals, conducted in 2010, the most used drug was alcohol. This study also revealed that 60,5% of young people had used alcohol in their lifetime; 42,4% had made some use in the year and 21,1% had consumed sometime in the last month.<sup>3</sup>

Drug use becomes a serious problem, especially when it happens during childhood or adolescence.<sup>3</sup> At this stage, human development is marked by important biopsychosocial changes to the experience in adulthood. Commonly, in this period arises the curiosity to try psychotropic substances, especially alcohol, among other illicit drugs. The use of alcohol is considered a risk factor, because usually your intake occurs in excess among adolescents and consequently increased the risk of violent incidents, the risk of addiction, and health problems in adulthood.<sup>4</sup>

Thus, it is understood that the vulnerability is accentuated in this age group for the use and abuse of psychoactive substances, leading to increased risk of violence. Therefore, it is considered that protective actions and the guarantee of universal rights of children and adolescents should be implemented in order to reducing social risks attributed to this population. The Status of Children and Adolescents, Law n. 8069/90 provides for the

protection against the use of psychotropic substances as prohibiting the sale of products that can cause physical or psychological dependence in children and adolescents (Art. 242). While Article 100 recommended taking into account the educational needs of children and adolescents, Art. 101 provides for actions involving support, guidance and treatment for those with problems related to alcohol and drugs.<sup>5</sup>

In this sense it is necessary implementing programs for prevention and care, given that the consumption of psychotropic substances has started earlier and earlier. The children and youth is the main target of legal drugs (alcohol and tobacco) and illegal, it often refers to the possibility of involvement in drug trafficking, as a way to fund their addiction.<sup>6</sup>

Prevention efforts should be directed to groups with risk behaviors resulting from the use and or drug abuse. Risk situations for drug use and abuse are strongly associated to the context in which children live and adolescents and exposure to legal and illegal drugs. Some risk situations such as poverty, proximity to the trafficking, little expectation of professional improvement, change of social class are examples of situations that can bring such individuals from improper and early use of alcohol and other drugs.<sup>6</sup>

Thus, primary prevention actions, to the present time, are allocated to health and education professionals, and are part of promotion activities, prevention and assistance to students from the School Health Program (PSE). This shows in sections X and XI the prevention and reduction of alcohol consumption and prevention of drug use, respectively, however, still needed more research about this phenomenon, and advance the search for knowledge and practices to prevent and combat drug use among children and adolescents.<sup>2</sup>

It is observed that it is necessary to establish alliances with the family, know their traditions, their values and customs, because the family has an important role in preventing the use of drugs.<sup>2</sup> Factors related to naturalization of drug use, such as the consumption of anxiolytics and alcohol bring ideas passed on through generations, perceiving in children and adolescents, often repeating the history of their families.<sup>7</sup> Another important factor is considered as a risk factor for drug use by children and adolescents is the media, which often associates the use of alcohol and other drugs to the beauty, power and social acceptance, making believe that to be successful or

socially acceptable it is necessary to use drugs.<sup>8</sup>

The performance in primary schools has proved of great importance for health promotion and prevention of substance abuse situations in childhood and adolescence.<sup>2</sup> Such activities open the possibility of dialogue, criticism and application processes educational able to promote the healthy development, requiring the abandonment of the myths and the adoption of a speech guided by evidence-based information.<sup>6</sup>

The health professionals work with the elementary schools is of the utmost importance and should be used interactive and constructive method in developing preventive actions positively and that translates into effective results.<sup>2</sup> Especially for nursing, school has proved to be a privileged space to carry out actions aimed at preventing the use of psychoactive substances, it is evident the success of educational activities with a playful approach, respecting the target audience development phase.<sup>9-11</sup>

In this context the University of Pernambuco search through their extension programs and culture expand the activities of teaching and research to society in general. Its objective: to encourage the participation of UPE students in long and culture shares; contribute to social transformation of the target community; promote the execution of integrated actions (teaching, research and extension) in the thematic areas of scope: health, education, culture, technology and production, human rights, labor, environment and communication; decentralize the actions of extension and culture; provide inducing activities of extension and culture in communities with social action needs; enable the articulation of UPE with organized and productive segments of society.

## OBJECTIVE

- Reporting experience of nursing academics from a university extension project involving educational activities for the prevention of misuse of drugs among children and adolescents

## METHOD

This experience report is from an extension project, focusing on the description and discussion of taught workshops, thereby aiming to share an experience of nursing students in educational activities for prevention of abuse of drugs among children and adolescents.

This project was developed in 2013 by students of the School of Nursing Nossa Senhora das Graças - FENSG/UPE, under the unit of faculty guidance, having followed the principles contained in Resolution 466/12. Is part of a larger project and was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of UPE by CAAE: 06601012.8.0000.5207. The same had the purpose of action the adoption of questioning with the use of educational activities for communication content on the prevention regarding the use of psychotropic substances. Considering the importance of playfulness to the education of the child, it was freely adapted a play on the theme of the story of Monica, authored by Mauricio de Souza.<sup>12</sup>

The team was formed by two teachers, who acted as guides and ten academics. Of these, one scholarship student-nine volunteers, with no difference as to the functions and involvement. In the workshops, the information was transmitted through simple language and easy to understand the target audience. This consists of children and adolescents 06-12 years of age, elementary school students from public schools.

To make the project possible, prior coordination was conducted with the teaching units for the proposed discussion with educators and subsequent scheduling of activities. At first the workshops were offered to the students of a primary school, when the activity was evaluated by educators this teaching unit, aiming to improve the same. After reformulation of some points, the activity was developed in other schools in the city of Recife, covering classes of elementary school.

For the preparation of workshops were held weekly meetings to discuss the script and the content to be presented to the audience, and then occurred trials, aimed at adaptation to the situation experienced by children. During the project execution was scheduled meetings, when scholars had the opportunity to conduct studies on the subject and so deepen as to prevent the use of drugs in childhood. Every presentation, the activity was evaluated by the group, when changes were made in the part of the script, in order to protect the risk situations of child.

The implementation of the workshops consisted of three stages. At first, introductory, we proceeded to the presentation of academic and children were informed that it would be staged a play on the prevention of drug use, based on a comic book Monica, entitled: A story that needs to end. At



that time was observed that before the piece's title, children demonstrating curiosity and even some anxiety to watch the play.

In the second time, during the course of the piece to not ignore the interests of the children presented by the narrative, which takes place in three scenarios: house, street and school, in which nine characters of Monica class: Zélio, his mother and father; Zé Luís; Monica, Cebolinha, Magali, dealer and the teacher, are represented by the students participating in the project.

In the third phase of activity, after the presentation of the play were performed to evaluate the learning activities with children, through games of questions and answers previously developed. This period of significant interaction contributes to the process of teaching and learning and is also opportunity to evaluate the activity.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The play is performed in six scenes: the first scene the family Zélio noticed the disappearance of objects in his home. This scene is a typical behavior of drug users, the Zélio boy without financial resources to support his habit, commits theft in his home. Identifying some signs and addictive behavior of children and adolescents in relation to drugs, family and school can anticipate the involvement and/or take appropriate measures when there is already initiation, with greater opportunities for success.<sup>13</sup>

In the 2<sup>nd</sup> scene the dealer offers drugs to Zélio. This scene depicts the ostensible how traffickers operate even in the approach to children. The 3<sup>rd</sup> scene shows Zélio offering drugs to other children and Zé Luis prevents them from using, action that avoided the first contact and therefore the involvement with drugs. Studies show that the age of first contact with alcohol occurred around 12 years of age, followed by 13 and 14 years old, occurring predominantly in familiar environment<sup>14</sup>. So should be developed preventive actions involving the educational context and enhancing understanding clearly the problems generated by drug use.

The 4<sup>th</sup> scene depicts Zé Luís taking the kids to school so that the teacher can explain about drugs, at which it is observed the importance of education in early childhood education, because through this information the child is warned and prevented about drugs and what include the adverse effects caused by them.

Historically, the school is a privileged space for dialogue, where the intertwining of

education to health increase the chances of positive results in the development of prevention work with drug use.<sup>13</sup> Note that most of the teachers know the importance of these actions, and are critical to the traditional education model, which had long been focused exclusively on repression without positive results for young people. However, the work is just beginning and the involvement of teachers with the problem, due to fear of violence and lack of training on the subject, leaving this task mainly to psychologists and specialized professionals and the Educational Program of Resistance to Drugs (PROERD).<sup>17</sup>

In the 5<sup>th</sup> scene the children and the teacher are Zélio drugging and lead to meet his parents. This scene depicts a difficult time experienced by the family as one realizes the difficulty of dealing with the situation and provide appropriate treatment for the child due to lack of drug-related information. The teacher in this case pointing contributes solutions to the problem. This situation reminds teens are undergoing constant change, and the family was established as an important point of support and balance, considered strategy for the "survival" of individuals and for the protection and socialization of its members and the transmission of social and cultural values.<sup>18</sup>

The 6<sup>th</sup> scene shows Zélio rehabilitated refusing dealer of drugs and rediscovering friends. Following the advice of the teacher, the parents put him in rehabilitation. In addition to the specific treatment received Zélio respect, love and dignified treatment of family and friends. It is believed that these factors are important and appropriate for the recovery of people in chemical dependency situation.

The assistance recommended by the National Policy for Users of Alcohol and other Drugs covers all levels of care, highlighting the care in hospital extra units such as the CAPS for users of alcohol and other drugs (CAPSad) and should also be included in the performance of a care Network Basic Health.<sup>19</sup> Highlighted by specialized services for people who make harmful use of these substances, the CAPSad must have multidisciplinary teams for clinical monitoring of its users, in order to reinsert it in society, enabling the appropriateness of status of agents in their own treatment.<sup>20</sup>

The insertion of the theme "education for prevention of drug use" is possible for children through carefully designed workshops that allow the approach of dynamically content

and an easy to understand language, as evidenced by the reported activity.<sup>21</sup>

There were observed throughout the project several factors that helped us improve the performances, as the discussion workshops with the teachers of the schools where the project was developed. Important to mention that during the planning phase, some teachers warned us about appropriate behavior before reports of children. Still, at times we were surprised when suddenly some children had a wide knowledge on Psychotropic Substances, considering the age. It is important to record the great response and attention that children and adolescents have shown every presentation made.

The interaction of the academic group and the careful planning favored the overcoming of difficulties, such as lack of appropriate equipment and the location of one of the schools on a fairly busy road, which required enormous effort at the time of presentation. Reported unexpected, rather than presenting themselves as obstacles, served as an improvement, to achieve the proposed objectives. With this experience we experience a preventive educational activity, which is essential in addressing the problems of contemporary society.

Note the increasing inclusion of nurses in primary health care services and activities related to school health, which have expanded their practice. Nurses can play an important role ahead to preventive actions for this audience, however, in their training needs to work harder this topic. In working with adolescents, professional must develop the ability to listen and seek the stories and experiences that the adolescent has. Thus, it is understood that health promotion is a potential for developing school spaces, as these are dialogues sites, privileged to exchange knowledge and expression of cultural diversity.<sup>22</sup>

## FINAL NOTES

This article aimed to the experience with an extension project, focusing on the description and discussion of workshops, aimed at sharing the Nurses of work experience in the prevention of misuse of drugs among children.

Whereas contact with psychotropic substances occurs increasingly early, it is imperative to the development of targeted preventive measures for children and adolescents. Among the many possibilities, we used the theatrical language to meeting this requirement by facilitating the theme

addiction approach; it is possible to act in an integrated manner to the various social issues of the day. We seek to show the audience the importance of healthy behaviors, as well as the prevention of risk situations for the abuse of psychotropic substances.

The involvement of children in primary schools shows that they have appropriated the knowledge communicated. Another good result is observed in the perception of the involvement of these individuals with the dynamics and the methodology used, which shows that the language and how the workshops were held to promote understanding of the reported content.

In the reported experience, academics played an important role in the implementation of preventive educational activities of the extension project. However, the issue needs to be addressed more during their training, and more financial resources should be devoted to teaching, extension and research that address the issue.

## FINANCING

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