

Innovative strategies to promote HIV/AIDS awareness in the Dominican Republic

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Background: In the Dominican Republic (DR), the estimated 0.9% HIV/AIDS prevalence represents a significant health and economic burden. We describe a national World AIDS Day outreach program to increase community awareness about HIV/AIDS transmission, diagnosis, prevention and treatment as well as educate citizens about related myths.

Methods: Medical students from five DR universities utilized five novel didactic strategies to highlight the impact of HIV/AIDS within universities, local communities, and national and international settings. Utilized strategies included dissemination of educational materials, university displays, health seminars, community outreach, and social media.

Outcomes: A team of 30 medical students organized the national HIV/AIDS campaign, “Getting to Zero”, to educate more than 3,000 citizens in two urban and one rural DR communities. Students improved collaborative practice models and gained expertise in developing and disseminating high-quality, low-cost health educational materials and health messages throughout different audiences. Encountered challenges included time constraints with academic schedules, limited economic resources, and team communication.

Implications: This educational program enhanced teamwork through the development of innovative health communication strategies for the DR population. Health professionals may use this model to develop future health campaigns in low-resource communities.