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TITLE

BUILDING KNOWLEDGE ON SCHISTOSOMIASIS MANSONI: EDUCATIONAL INTERVENTIONS AND EPIDEMIOLOGICAL INSIGHTS IN MURITIBA, BAHIA

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ABSTRACT

Schistosomiasis mansoni (SM) is a parasitic disease caused by *Schistosoma mansoni*, transmitted via freshwater contaminated by snails of the genus *Biomphalaria*. The Recôncavo region of Bahia, including Muritiba, has historically faced significant public health challenges related to SM due to the presence of rivers and water bodies that facilitate transmission. Between 2011 and 2021, Muritiba recorded 2 confirmed cases of SM, with no reported treatments. However, neighboring municipalities such as São Félix and Maragogipe reported much higher case burdens, with 1,288 and 2,102 cases, respectively, indicating substantial local transmission risks. To address this, we designed two complementary educational interventions aimed at raising awareness and understanding of SM in Muritiba and surrounding areas. The first initiative, implemented by the Human Parasitology Study Group (GEPaH), involved an interactive parasitological stand at the Multidisciplinary Pathology Seminar (SEMULPATO) in Muritiba. Through various educational tools—including biscuit models of the parasite life cycle, microscopy slides, and health fair-style engagement—the stand catered to diverse audiences ranging from schoolchildren to community elders. By adapting scientific content to different knowledge levels, the initiative fostered a deepened understanding of SM transmission, prevention, and diagnosis within the local population. The second intervention, conducted at the Health Sciences Center of the Federal University of Recôncavo of Bahia, utilized playful learning methods, such as a life-sized board game and interactive banners displaying SM epidemiology and life stages. This "Dialogues and Biointeractive Interactions" (DBI) event engaged university students, healthcare professionals, and community members, promoting SM awareness through engaging, game-based learning. Participants answered questions about the parasite's life cycle, prevention strategies, and the role of the *Biomphalaria* snail, enhancing their knowledge in an enjoyable, competitive setting. Both initiatives highlight the effectiveness of combining scientific education with interactive, community-focused outreach. The integration of playful pedagogical tools and microscopic visualization provided a creative platform for disseminating knowledge about SM. These efforts not only increased awareness but also empowered participants to become health advocates within their communities. The prevalence of SM in the region underscores the need for continued education and community engagement to control the spread of the disease. Our interventions, complemented by epidemiological data, emphasize the vital role of health education in regions facing parasitic disease challenges and foster university-community collaborations for sustainable health solutions.

KEYWORDS

Health education; Teaching Methodology; *Schistosoma mansoni*; Educational Technology; Prevention

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