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UNIVERSITY EXTENSION IN MEDICINE: COMMUNITY TEACHING INTEGRATION AND THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL ACTIONS IN HEALTH ON THE COMMUNITY AND MEDICAL TRAINING

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Abstract: Objective: To present an extension project in Collective Health developed by medical students from the *Serra dos Órgãos University Center (UNIFESO)*, with the aim of promoting health and well-being through social actions, academic interdisciplinarity and encouraging a culture of care. **Methodology:** Based on a biopsychosocial approach, the project includes dynamic health practices, educational activities, lectures, practical workshops and vaccination and donation collection campaigns, meeting the needs of local institutions such as nursing homes and shelters. The main activities involved quality time and information with vulnerable groups, vaccination campaigns and health education, significantly increasing vaccination coverage and access to health services. **Results:** The interventions carried out favored access to health care for vulnerable populations, promoted the prevention of chronic diseases such as hypertension and diabetes and expanded vaccination coverage in various age groups, covering local residents and tourists in Teresópolis. **Final considerations:** The project had a positive impact in meeting the health needs of the community, highlighting the importance of collective efforts to promote equitable health, academic extension and interdisciplinary learning, strengthening the links between the university and the community, as well as integrating and favoring the development of soft and hard technologies (welcoming, bonding and comprehensive care) in medical practice. **Keywords:** Social actions 1; Collective health 2; Transversality in health 3. University extension 4;

the health services offered to the population has become evident. This demand stems from various factors, but mainly from the tendency of doctors to adopt a biomedical view of the patient, ignoring psychosocial, educational and cultural aspects such as customs, beliefs and religions. This approach reduces the importance of the doctor-patient relationship, resulting in quick and superficial consultations, in which care is focused on the disease and not on the patient as a whole. In this scenario, Gadamer (1994) highlights the need for greater sensitivity to the patient's suffering. He proposes a new professional approach that effectively promotes health, considering the patient in their physical, psychological and social entirety, and not just from a biological perspective.

This change in perspective highlights the importance of social actions in medical training, which are fundamental to the development of a more humanized and comprehensive practice. Participation in social and community projects allows future doctors to get closer to the diverse realities that make up society, gaining a deeper understanding of the cultural, social and emotional dynamics that influence the health of individuals, providing students with an apprenticeship in more humanized care. (Hornblow AR, 1988)

In addition, social actions contribute to the development of communication and empathy skills, which are fundamental for building a doctor-patient relationship based on trust and safety (Halpern J, 2001). By interacting with different social groups, especially the most vulnerable, medical students learn to value diversity and adapt their practices to better meet the individual needs of each patient. In this way, medical training that integrates social actions not only enriches the educational experience of future doctors, but also promotes a more humanized, person-centred practice and the promotion of comprehensive health.

INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, the need to reformulate

Therefore, by integrating social actions into medical training, it is possible to develop professionals who are more sensitive, empathetic and able to deal with the complexity of the human being. This approach promotes a medical practice that values health in all its dimensions. In this way, the CUIDAR Program seeks to achieve the goal of a more humanized medicine, highlighting the importance of experiential learning and scientific initiation in the context of university extension (Tenório and Beraldi, 2010).

BACKGROUND

A great motivator for the development of the project is the existence and need to learn more about and explore the interrelationship between the social, economic and environmental determinants of health, as proposed by Dahlgreen and Whitehead's health determinants diagram, which highlights the relationship between the base of the diagram - individuals - with their personal characteristics (age, gender and genetic factors) and the health determinants that surround the base of the diagram, in which they exert an influence on their potential, susceptibility and health conditions that affect or can affect a person or population. Throughout this project we will explore, through a journey of academic-social innovation, the relevance of health actions in promoting local well-being and the transformative impact on the lives of both community members and students and future health professionals, developing skills, knowledge and strategies through the relationship between teaching and practice in public health, as well as an approach and appreciation of transversality in health.

As highlighted by the National Commission on Social Determinants of Health (CNDSS), Social and Community Networks represent a crucial element in improving the health landscape. However, it is clear that this

aspect faces significant challenges in its development, highlighting the urgent need for attention to boost its progress, thus showing the importance of targeted investments and efforts to strengthen these vital structures.

Within this context, recognizing the need for concrete actions to strengthen the Public and Community Networks, there is an urgent need to implement an organized program of health actions in the Teresópolis community. This program would represent a link between the university and society, based on teaching and extension, health, information and prevention. As a result, through the program's meetings, the members would learn important virtues for their future careers and as health professionals, such as: the improvement of communication skills and the development of interpersonal relationship tools through contact with the public; teamwork; a mindset of empathy and solidarity through experiencing and visualizing the different realities and capacities among individuals; creative thinking and the development of innovative solutions capable of generating changes, real and lasting impacts on health and lifestyle, according to the scenario and demand, since academic interdisciplinary activities promoted by academics in extension projects can contribute significantly to improving the health and quality of life of the communities served.

OBJECTIVES

GENERAL OBJECTIVE

Promoting the physical and mental health and well-being of the local population through social and health actions aligned with biopsychosocial guidelines.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

- To have a positive impact on the local community, promoting quality time, learning and information.
- Contributing to support and fundraising aimed at improving the living conditions and health of the community and social institutions.
- Encourage Unifeso students to take part in interdisciplinary activities that seek knowledge related to collective and community health.
- Seeking to improve technical and interpersonal skills in order to train professionals with multifocal competencies.
- Developing a comprehensive and supportive approach, with the aim of promoting a positive and lasting transformation in the health scenario of the community served.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Promoting collective health and community well-being requires the integration of different approaches and disciplines. The “*CUIDAR Program: Uniting Hearts and Transforming Lives*” is based on a solid theoretical and empirical foundation, seeking to engage the local community through social and health actions based on biopsychosocial guidelines.

The biopsychosocial guidelines, as described by Gadamer (1974), emphasize the importance of considering the biological, psychological and social aspects of health for a holistic approach to care, developing the thought called “medical humanities”, which explores how the human experience deals with other experiences of patients, doctors, health, illness and suffering. The author Halpern J. (2001) demonstrates that empathy between doctor and patient is essential, as it provides greater security for the patient, thus making them more willing to inform their problems, symptoms and doubts more easily.

Studies such as those by Hornblow AR, (1988) show that medical schools have a constant need to systematically train their students in humanistic qualities. The integration of diverse knowledge and practices can lead to more effective and comprehensive results, positively impacting students, enabling them to create bonds with patients and to practice comprehensive medicine. The CUIDAR Program seeks to identify and meet local health needs through surveys and previous studies, collaborating with institutions such as nursing homes, orphanages and municipal schools, thus pursuing the concepts described by the World Health Organization (WHO), which defines health as a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, and not just the absence of disease.

The literature also highlights the importance of active community and student participation in extension projects. Tenório and Beraldi (2010) point out that experiential learning and scientific initiation are crucial for academic and personal development. The involvement of Unifeso students in practical activities allows them to apply theoretical knowledge in real contexts, promoting a more complete and integrated education.

The integration of biopsychosocial guidelines, interdisciplinarity and social actions are key elements in promoting a more complete and humanized medical education. Such initiatives not only benefit the local community, but also contribute to training health professionals who are better prepared to face the challenges of contemporary medical practice.

METHODOLOGY

This is an extension project developed by UNIFESO medical students, which began in 2024 in Teresópolis, Rio de Janeiro, with the aim of promoting the well-being, training and health of the communities served in a comprehensive, creative and sustainable way. The research is based on valuing biopsychosocial guidelines, determinants and transversality in health, seeking to understand social phenomena through interaction with the community, interviews and direct observation.

The theoretical basis for the project was obtained through a literature review, covering articles available on the Scielo platform, published between 1999 and 2024. 14 articles were selected to support the research. The problem investigated lies in identifying the community's health needs and devising effective strategies to promote education and health care. The justification for the study is based on the social relevance of the proposal, considering the need to strengthen access to information and health services for vulnerable populations.

The research took a qualitative approach, using information obtained from interaction with the community and local health professionals. In addition, educational activities and information materials were developed in order to reach the participants and broaden their knowledge of a given health issue. The method adopted is based on direct observation, active listening to the community and data analysis, making it possible to understand the challenges faced and formulate appropriate strategies for a given scenario.

The project was implemented through meetings and field actions, targeting the local population of Teresópolis, including children, the elderly, patients and vulnerable individuals. Initially, a preliminary survey was carried out to map out the needs of the community, in order to establish clear objectives for the in-

terventions and actions. Based on this analysis, visits were made to nurseries, community schools, nursing homes, orphanages, hospitals and health units, with the aim of providing moments of quality, assistance and promoting well-being.

The implementation of the project involved talks and information sessions at the most vulnerable locations, covering topics such as disease prevention, vaccinations, mental health and quality of life. At the same time, strategies were applied to ensure individualized and humanized care, through playful, recreational and educational activities. Educational materials were also distributed and donations collected according to the needs identified in the community served.

DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

The literature review, together with the planning and execution of actions throughout 2024, highlighted a significant gap and need for greater attention to the health of vulnerable groups, such as the elderly and children. This underscores the urgency of broader approaches and strategies that seek to mitigate the challenges that create a barrier between these groups and effective care. Thus, during the meetings and activities, the positive impact on promoting the health and well-being of the local population and also on the personal and professional development of the student volunteers involved was remarkable.

In 2024, the CUIDAR Program: Uniting Hearts and Transforming Lives carried out several outstanding initiatives, including visits to the Nova Vida Shelter and Lar Feliz, the lecture *"The importance of extension and the academic-social bond through health actions in the training of future doctors"*, the Vaccination Campaign held at Feirarte Teresópolis, the social action *"Prevention and Treatment of Chronic Diseases and Breast Cancer"* and the *"Solidarity Christmas at Lar Feliz Asylum"*

event. These actions showed significant results, highlighting the program's importance in promoting community health.

Visits to Abrigo Nova Vida and Lar Feliz gave students the opportunity to understand the realities and specific needs of the residents. This interaction allowed for the development of personalized strategies and ongoing support initiatives. In addition, the visits highlighted the importance of quality time and empathy in humanized care, essential factors for training medical professionals committed to ethical practice and sensitive to the demands of the population.

A lecture was given to Unifeso students to introduce the CUIDAR program and talk about the importance of university extension and the link between the university and society, especially through social actions in health. This activity in question addressed how the activities that will be carried out by the project are fundamental in the training of future doctors, highlighting the importance of a holistic and humanized approach in medical practice. The lecture was widely attended, with great interest and engagement from the participants, who recognized the value of the initiatives for professional training and for strengthening community support networks.

The Vaccination Campaign, carried out in partnership with the Municipal Health Department, had a significant highlight. Promoted at Feirarte Teresópolis - a strategic weekend location in the Alto neighborhood - the campaign reached local residents and tourists, increasing vaccination coverage against influenza and polio. The presence of the 'Zé Gotinha' mascot significantly increased children's and guardians' interest in the vaccination campaign, leading to greater adherence among children; while the blood pressure and blood glucose check-up area attracted mainly the elderly. This action resulted in the development and improvement of skills and techni-

ques in these procedures for the participating students, who were able to improve in a practical way and under the supervision of health professionals, the handling of measuring devices and tests, as well as the technique of handling injectables for vaccination. Finally, by collecting data during the campaign, the results were analyzed and the population was given guidance by the local health professionals, and interested residents were registered in the community primary care system, thus demonstrating the effectiveness of the strategies adopted to engage the community and promote adherence to health campaigns.

The social action "*Prevention and Treatment of Chronic Diseases and Breast Cancer*" held at the Alto Baptist Church in Teresópolis reinforced the importance of awareness and access to information for health promotion and early detection of these conditions. Through educational talks, interactive activities and the distribution of information materials, it sought to sensitize the community about risk factors, preventive measures and constant monitoring for early diagnosis and control. The initiative reinforced the need for continuous monitoring for chronic diseases such as hypertension and diabetes, in which the public was given control measurements and guidance, encouraging changes in lifestyle habits and encouraging adherence to self-care and the search for an appropriate therapeutic line of care. In addition, the discussion session on myths and truths, the distribution of informative materials from the Pink October campaign and the practical demonstration of self-examination, using anatomical silicone breast prostheses TGD-4055 on a board, which can be handled for self-examination, together made it possible to disseminate reliable information according to the WHO, normal and pathological breast recognition, clinical warning signs and the identification of nodules on palpation of the models. Therefore, it

can be inferred that the exams and practices covered in this action were a differential in the engagement and interest of the target audience, proving essential for raising awareness about the importance of self-care and early diagnosis, since identification at an early stage significantly increases the chances of greater therapeutic success. In this way, the action contributed to strengthening the population's autonomy in relation to their own health, reducing barriers to care and encouraging engagement in preventive practices.

The “*Solidarity Christmas at Lar Feliz Asylum*” provided moments of joy, hospitality and recognition for both the elderly residents and the health and care professionals. The program included moments of fraternization and solidarity, which were organized by volunteer members of the program, offering a festive atmosphere through Christmas decorations, a special supper with typical dishes, cultural presentations and recreational activities, promoting social interaction and reviving emotional memories.

The delivery of collected donations, including non-perishable food, hygiene items, geriatric diapers and personalized gifts, was accompanied by the figure of “*Santa Claus*”, making the moment emotional and special. This action promoted the inclusion and appreciation of senior citizens and their mental and emotional health, as well as reinforcing the importance of solidarity and traditions, motivating members and the community to engage in social initiatives, highlighting that quality time is care and health.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The “CUIDAR Program: Uniting Hearts and Transforming Lives” is an initiative of great value to both the Teresópolis community and UNIFESO students. The activities carried out during the first semester of 2024, as well as future planned activities, demonstrate the relevance of university extension projects that promote physical and emotional health through a biopsychosocial and interdisciplinary lens.

Visits to shelters and nursing homes, the vaccination campaign and educational talks proved to be effective in meeting the needs of vulnerable groups, promoting a positive and lasting impact on the local community. In addition, these actions provided the students with a rich and formative practical experience, strengthening their commitment to a more humanized and supportive medical practice.

In conclusion, the activities carried out by the “CUIDAR Program” in 2024 proved to be effective in promoting the health and well-being of the community, while at the same time providing valuable practical experience for Unifeso students. The continuity and expansion of this program is fundamental to consolidating the link between university and society, ensuring that more communities benefit and that future health professionals are trained with a broader and more integrated vision of care. Therefore, the aim of the “CUIDAR” program is to increasingly encourage a more supportive and equitable health practice, which recognizes the importance of all the dimensions, challenges and determinants to the broad promotion of care.

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