

REPORT OF A DENTAL EXPERIENCE IN AMAZONAS - UNIEVANGÉLICA ITINERANTE PROJECT

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ABSTRACT

The observational study, conducted in April 2024 on the Marimba Coast, Amazonas, was part of a university extension project of the UniEVANGÉLICA, University of Anápolis-GO, in partnership with the Asas de Socorro Organization. The team, composed of volunteers from the fields of medicine, dentistry, nursing, and physical therapy, used a hospital boat to serve the riverside community, offering medical and dental care. Poor oral health conditions were identified, such as high rates of tooth decay and advanced periodontal disease, and challenges such as a lack of radiographic examinations and adequate clinical facilities were faced. Interventions in schools included guidance for teachers and students on oral health, with a view to longitudinal care. The project highlighted the isolation of riverside communities and the need for innovative solutions to improve access to health services.

Keywords: health promotion; riverine population; oral health;

INTRODUCTION

The term Health Promotion (HP) has been widely discussed in various contexts over the years, especially in the health sector, with the aim of improving quality of life. Health Promotion has a broader objective than simple prevention; it seeks to transform the quality of life and work of populations by promoting conditions that favor a healthier and more satisfying life (FRANCO, *et al.*, 2015).

In order to develop a Health Promotion policy, it is essential to take into account the specific characteristics of Brazil, while following the international guidelines and agreements defined since the Ottawa Conference in 1986. These documents establish Health Promotion and highlight the main social challenges, creating new priorities in the sector, such as promoting people's autonomy, strengthening community action, overcoming the division and fragmentation of public

policies and health care, and encouraging cooperation between different areas, creating healthy environments that improve quality of life (BRASIL, 2012).

Brazil is home to populations not only in urban and rural areas, but also in riverside communities located mainly along the rivers of the Amazon basin in the north of the country. (GUIMARÃES, *et al.*, 2020), these populations have several particularities among themselves, such as social organization, economic activities, their own institutions, beliefs, and customs, creating a wide range of distinct communities. In this scenario, Health Promotion Policies play a crucial role in strategic responses to combat inequalities (LIRA; CHAVES, 2015).

Health care for this population is regulated by the National Primary Care Policy (PNAB, 2017), which establishes guidelines for the organization and management of health actions, including the financing of Ribeirinha Family Health Teams (ESFR) and the funding of Basic River Health Units (UBSF), with a focus on expanding coverage and access to primary care, especially in areas that are difficult to access, such as the Amazon region (BRAZIL, 2017).

This study aims to report on the academic experience within a traveling initiative promoting oral health in a riverine population in Amazonas.

METHOD

This observational study describes a social action experience carried out in the riverside community of Costa do Marimba, located in the state of Amazonas, in April 2024. The action was promoted as part of the university extension activities of the Evangelical University of Goiás, Anápolis-GO, in partnership with the organization Asas de Socorro. Volunteers from the Medicine, Dentistry, Nursing, and Physical Therapy programs participated in a boat equipped to provide assistance to the local population. The project was coordinated by the “UniMissões” program, with the support of the institutional chaplaincy and social responsibility coordination.

RESULTS

The riverside community of Costa do Marimba, with 700 inhabitants, received dental care through assistance activities. These activities included clinical consultations, surgeries, and preventive measures, as well as educational initiatives, such as discussion groups and supervised tooth brushing. In total, 105 consultations were carried out, with 153 dental procedures, 42 extractions, 19 periodontal cleanings, and 35 consultations on brushing techniques.

The data were organized by community, providing a brief description of living conditions and local needs, as well as the educational and assistance activities carried out. According to the 2010 SB Brazil survey and the project results, a worrying oral health situation was found in the riverside communities. The main clinical findings revealed high rates of dental caries, in line with national rates that indicate caries as one of the main oral health problems in Brazil. In addition, advanced periodontal disease was observed, characterized by severe gum inflammation and bone loss, situations that are also reflected in national data pointing to a high prevalence of periodontal disease (BRASIL, 2017).

Both caries and periodontal disease share risk factors related to unfavorable socioeconomic conditions and lack of control in the removal of dental biofilm, aspects that were evidenced in the action and corroborate national data. These issues are accentuated by the absence of preventive care and limited access to oral health services, especially in remote communities.

Interventions in schools, including the distribution of toothbrushes and guidance on oral health, are a positive step toward promoting preventive practices. However, as pointed out by Lira and Chaves (2015), the effectiveness and sustainability of these actions depends on continuity and integration with community practices and local policies.

According to the review by Cohen-Carneiro *et al.* (2009), structural and logistical limitations are recurring problems that affect the quality of care in geographically isolated areas. The main challenges and difficulties encountered in the action were: lack of radiographic examinations, absence of an adequate clinical

structure, need for emergency management, lack of instruments and utensils for better clinical conduct, and insufficient time to meet all patients' needs.

CONCLUSION

The initiative aimed at promoting health among the riverine population of the Amazon was a transformative experience, both for the individuals affected and for the project participants.

From an academic perspective, this experience is in line with the National Curriculum Guidelines (DCNs) for Dentistry programs, which recommend that students acquire skills to work in varied and challenging environments, promoting health and preventing disease in various socioeconomic and cultural contexts (BRASIL, 2021).

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