

SUCCESSFUL ACTIVITIES TO MAKE THE HTLV VISIBLE AMONG HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS IN SÃO PAULO, BRAZIL

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Background: Since 1992, the Instituto Adolfo Lutz (IAL), the Central Public Health Laboratory in São Paulo, Brazil, has been carrying out studies on HTLV-1 and HTLV-2 infections, and since 1998 has performed HTLV serology as routine. At the time, these retroviruses were unknown among healthcare professionals in São Paulo and in Brazil. Thus, to make these retroviruses and people living with HTLV (PLHTLV) more visible, we developed some activities.

Methods: (i) Disseminate data on the prevalence of HTLV in different at-risk populations: blood donors, patients from AIDS and STD Reference Centers, and HTLV out-patient clinics; (ii) Disclose problems encountered in the laboratory diagnosis and look for solutions for its improvement; (iii) Publish in the São Paulo Epidemiological Bulletin (BEPA), a magazine of the Center for Disease Control, Secretary of Health of São Paulo (CCD-SES/SP) the best laboratory diagnostic algorithms, based on its performance and cost-effectiveness; (iv) Offer scholarships for undergraduate and graduate students, including Masters and PhD students, in order to acquire specialization in HTLV; (v) Include the subject “Laboratory Diagnosis of Human Retroviruses” in the Postgraduate Course of the Faculty of Pharmacy, University of São Paulo (1996-2005) and the subject “Immunological and molecular biology procedures applied in the study of HTLV-1 and -2 infections” in the Postgraduate Public Health Course of the CCD-SES/SP (since 2005); (vi) Search for prognostic markers for diseases development in HTLV-monoinfected and HTLV/HIV-, HTLV/HBV- and HTLV/HCV-coinfected individuals; (vii) Give Lectures of HTLV and of the HTLV World Day, write articles, disseminate information in websites and in the Virtual Health Library of the SES/SP (BVS-SES/SP); and (viii) Make HTLV advertising banners.

Results and conclusion: All these activities were successful and promoted visibility to HTLV and PLHTLV. During this period (almost 30 years), the staff of IAL participated and presented 82 HTLV routine and research data in national conferences and 60 in international conferences, and published 62 articles. More than 30 lectures were presented, and 43 healthcare professionals were qualified in HTLV. Great interest in Postgraduate courses has been observed. Articles on HTLV World Day were published (BEPA 2018;15(179):27-30; Rev Inst Adolfo Lutz. 2018;77:e1751), and banners were displayed in the lobby of IAL and SES-SP, throughout the month of October since 2018.