

Alcohol Use and Abuse

**Sustainable Educational Programs and Research documentation for
the community of Rancho al Medio, Dominican Republic**

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ABSTRACT

Using an educational module on the effects of Alcohol as well as a community questionnaire, the research team attempted to glean more information regarding alcohol use in the community of Rancho al Medio in the Dominican Republic. Although the sample size was small, patterns were found in community members' opinions and attitudes toward the substance. Knowledge of alcohol's dangers were mainly based on experience and a large majority of those interviewed had gaps in their knowledge with regard to dangers during pregnancy and to the liver. Subjective information, such as whether alcohol was a problem in the community was largely split down generational lines. Available resources are few for those in need of help with regard to alcohol. This lack of resources and of important knowledge are issues that should be addressed in future work with the community.

INTRODUCTION

Alcohol use is widespread throughout the world. A part of many cultural traditions and ceremonies, it brings people together as much as it pulls people apart. The dangerous effects of alcohol have caused the deaths of countless people around the world but its use continues to make up a daily part of people's lives. In the case of Rancho al Medio, a south-central village of the Dominican Republic, the situation is largely similar to that found in many American cities. Alcohol use among its residents is widespread along with experiential knowledge of its effects. However, some aspects of alcohol education have not made as large of an impact in Rancho. It is with this lack of essential knowledge in mind, that a health education campaign was carried out in early March of 2007. In addition, a diagnostic looking at the opinions and knowledge of alcohol that community members held was run. In this way, a small amount of light is shed on alcohol use and knowledge in the community of Rancho al Medio.

GOALS

The program on alcohol was based around particular goals for the community. The first goal was to educate the community on the deleterious effects of excessive alcohol use. Second, to assess the current attitudes and opinions regarding alcohol. Third, to assess the prevalence of alcohol as well as the role it played in the community. Fourth was to train a community member in the education module to create a resource within the community. In this way, the hope was that a sustainable resource would be created allowing the community to access the information when the project team was gone. The last goal of this project was to investigate resources (i.e. cessation programs) available to the community with regard to alcohol abuse. Pre-project investigations found little to no information on alcohol resources that could possibly be available to the members of Rancho al Medio whether through the government or not. It with these goals in mind that the project came together and ultimately took shape.

METHODS

On top of the community diagnosis questionnaire, a 25 minute educational module was presented about alcohol (See Appendix 1). It covered a variety of topics regarding alcohol: route in the

body, mechanism, vocabulary (i.e. “standard drink”), differences of alcohol in different people, the dangerous effects (i.e. Fetal Alcohol Syndrome), unhealthy conditions associated with alcohol abuse (i.e. cirrhosis of the liver). High-quality visual aids were used in order to create a visual, and therefore more concrete connection for the audience memory (See Appendix 4). This included acronyms that represented the main take-away points of the presentation. The module valued and encouraged audience participation and interaction with the speaker. A goal for the module was to be a dialog between the team member and the members of the community. Questions were asked regarding audience opinions and understanding and demonstrations were held regarding how to identify what one “standard drink” really looked like. After each segment of the presentation, a review was carried out, with the audience members teaching back what, if anything, they had learned. Small groups were split at the end of the presentation to discuss on a smaller level the themes and information presented in the module as well as individually evaluate using a pre-made evaluation form (See Appendix 3). Audience members collected at the central village pavilion through word of mouth as well as posted signs at high community traffic areas. The module was presented 4 times and on average, the audience consisted of about 20 members of the community, evenly split between the sexes. Because of the nature of the community, many members trafficked the area where the module was presented. As a result, the audience consisted of adults as well as adolescents, young adults and occasionally children.

In order to address the project goal of a sustainable resource within the community, a community member was trained in the education module information. A young man by the name of Papo was chosen. Having an enthusiasm for the information as well as being a constant member of the audience, Papo became an ideal candidate to keep the information available to the community after the project team left. Papo was trained in the information on alcohol through individual teaching as well as through interaction during the module. After training was complete, Papo was able to teach the entire module independent of the team.

In order to gauge the community’s attitudes and knowledge of alcohol, a questionnaire was formulated, containing information about normal practices concerning alcohol as well as information regarding access and preference (See Appendix 2). To implement the questionnaire in the community, members of the research team used a map to cover the major sites of the community, including resident

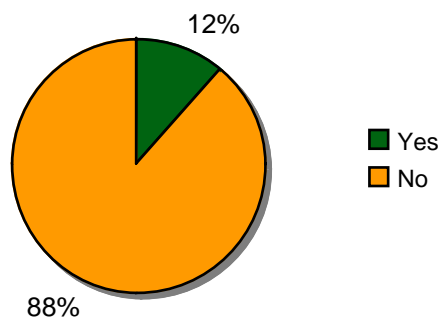


houses as well as common areas including the bar and central pavilion located in the central area of the village. The overwhelming majority of the adult community members are illiterate, so an anonymous survey was not a good option to distribute, as well as the limited time that the research team had to conduct its work. As a result of these restrictions of time and literacy, each respondent participated in a one-on-one spoken interview. The interviewer would go through the questions of the survey and record the responses. In some instances, a voice-recorder was used to ensure accurate reproduction of the responses. All interviews (and communication in general) was carried out entirely in Spanish.

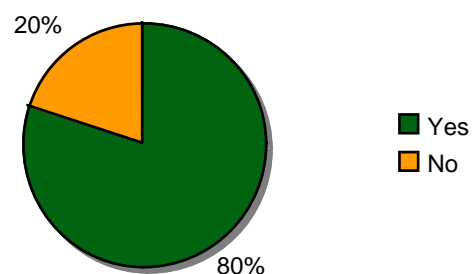
FINDINGS

The results of the questionnaire on alcohol gave the research team an interesting look into the current attitudes and practices of Rancho al Medio. The sample size for the findings was small. Only 20 people were interviewed regarding their opinions on alcohol. Nevertheless, looking at the data from this small group, one can still get a general picture of the attitudes and opinions regarding alcohol in the community. Opinions about alcohol's presence in the community were largely drawn down generational lines. The majority of those interviewed under 25 saw no problem with alcohol in the community. However, those above the age of 25 cited fights, bad health and increased sickness as evidence of its detrimental effects in the community.

Is Alcohol a Problem in the Community? Under 25



Is Alcohol a Problem in the Community? Over 25



The most common types of alcohol that the community members cited as being drunk were beer and rum. These were the drinks of choice mainly because they were the lowest price and easily available. While no one in the community produces alcohol on their own, in the village, there are 3 main places in which people buy alcohol. There is a bar, a *colmado* (the central pavilion area that serves a few refreshments) and a drink stand. The majority of the people interviewed (75%) mentioned independently that alcohol is expensive when compared to other necessary expenses. Nevertheless, all respondents drink alcohol except for one senior member citing her Christianity as the reason. Not generally drunk with meals, drinking alcohol is largely a weekend activity, with many respondents citing Saturday and Sunday as the main days in which people drink. When asked why people in the community drink, tradition and custom were largely cited as reasons as well as simply to feel good. All respondents, with the exception of the senior respondent said that drinking alcohol was not looked down upon in the community.

While there was some discrepancy as to what age people started to drink (the older generation responded with older ages while the younger generation said younger ages), the majority stated that most started to drink around the mid-teen years around 15 and 16. When asked about available resources, some cited rehabilitation programs in the capital, the majority of people interviewed said that there were no resources for those wanting to quit alcohol use/alcoholism. When asked what community members do if someone has a problem with alcohol, many interviewees cited “gossip” as the only activity.

Most people had some idea as to the dangers of alcohol. Most associated these dangers with the immediate physical effects of intoxication. Vomiting and impaired coordination and driving were the only answers given as to how alcohol was damaging to the body. When asked if there is a situation where drinking alcohol is dangerous, the only responses were when the drinker had an empty stomach, when he or she was crazy and when he or she was driving. While many people recognized that too much alcohol is unhealthy, many could not say in what way nor did they realize that specific problems occurred in the body. Of the most important information lacking from the community’s knowledge was that of the dangers of drinking while pregnant. 60% of those interviewed did not know that alcohol was dangerous to the fetus while it was inside the mother.

DISCUSSION

The community members, on the whole, have a good grasp as to the dangers of alcohol. Knowledge is widespread and people use it much like many other countries in the world, drinking on weekends, occasionally to excess. With regard to the questionnaire, differences in answers can largely be explained through differences in generation and societal placement. For example, the older generation of the community does not have as much direct interaction with the younger generation in situations related to drinking. Youth often drink together away from adults, going on their own or down to the shore in order to drink. This explains the difference of answers regarding the ages at which people start to drink. It was interesting to note the differences in what people saw as problems that alcohol was responsible. The older generation saw it as a problem while the younger generation did not. This could be because the older generation disapproves of the current cultural changes (e.g. reggaetone music influences) taking place while seeing the past through rose-colored glasses.



The most troubling finding of the community diagnosis was the lack of knowledge regarding drinking and pregnancy. Because this affects not only the safety of the mother's body but also the very life of the child, it is a very important matter. Through informal interviews, many community members recognized the dangers of alcohol to the pregnant woman as the same to any other person without knowing that alcohol can and will cause severe adverse effects in the developing child.

Another frustrating finding was the lack of resources available to the community if they wanted to quit. Many said that there were no resources available, however when pressed further, they conceded that there were resources but they were all located in major cities. These resources are by no means Alcoholic's Anonymous, however. The resources that are available are rehabilitation centers for those addicted to all varieties of drugs. Stigma attached to such places as well as difficulty even reaching them from the village prevent anyone who may want to fix their problem from doing it.

CONCLUSION

While alcohol knowledge is widespread in the community of Rancho al Medio, this does not mean that all essential information is passed along. Large gaps exist in the community's knowledge that could colossally affect a family's lives. In order to improve this knowledge base, as well as make the efforts put forth long-lasting, a few future improvements should be made to the alcohol use and abuse program. First, even though they may not be able to immediately access them, the program should provide the community with information about resources available to them regarding alcohol cessation and treatment. During interviewing and the education module, many community members seemed to know that alcohol is bad if too much is ingested, however they didn't know about the specific problems that occur as a result such as cirrhosis of the liver and fetal alcohol syndrome. These subjects were introduced in the module but were not explained at length and it was these in-depth explanations that the community members wanted to know more about. Going along with this, the next iteration of the alcohol module should increase the sophistication and depth of information because the community members knew and understood much more than what was expected with regard to bodily functions and effects. Lastly, the module should include even more interactive segments in the module to demonstrate the different properties of alcohol. The most successful aspects of the module were those that involved the audience the most creating not a person talking to a group but a group talking to each other. Hopefully, with some new improvements, the alcohol use and abuse program will be able to attain all of its original goals and the community of Rancho al Medio will be able to make fully knowledgeable decisions regarding their alcohol use in the future.

References

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Appendix

1. Program Transcript
2. Alcohol Questionnaire
3. Program Evaluation form
4. Visual Aids

¿Qué es una sustancia?

Una sustancia es algo que usted pone en su cuerpo que afecta la manera que usted piensa, se siente y se comporta. Algunos son "calmantes" y retrasan el cerebro y su cuerpo. Algunos son "estimulantes" y aceleran su cuerpo. Algunos son los "alucinógenos" que hacen ustedes ven y oyen las cosas que no ocurren realmente.

Alcohol y Ud. O ¿Que Pasó Anoche?

Hola, me llamo Mateo y ahora vamos a hablar sobre el alcohol.
Así, primero, puede decirme alguien

¿Cual es el alcohol?

¿Por que lo beben personas?

Alcohol en General

Todos saben lo que es el alcohol. Lo bebemos todo el tiempo en bebidas como cerveza, el vino y el licor. Es el material en la bebida que le da su patada. Es el ingrediente que causa que las situaciones estén un poco mas interesante. ¿Pero que ES exactamente este ingrediente y por qué tiene los efectos que lo hace? El alcohol es un tipo de droga. En cantidades pequeñas, el alcohol no tiene mal efectos. Al contrario, puede causar que personas aflojen arriba, fueron un poco más feliz y se sientan más cómodo. Pero, todos sabemos que cuando alguien toma demasiado alcohol, la situación puede llegar a ser un poco loco. Los efectos del alcohol llegan a ser mucho más amplificados, y hacen tropezar a alguien que ha bebido demasiado, diciendo a veces las cosas que el no hace de otro modo y, en general, no comportando como sí mismos.

Alcohol En El Cuerpo

Para entender por qué esto pasa, necesitamos entender lo que pasa en su cuerpo cuando usted bebe alcohol. Cuándo usted bebe una bebida que contiene alcohol, como cerveza, el vino o el licor, su cuerpo rápidamente lo absorbe. Las cantidades pequeñas se absorben en la boca* pero la mayoría entra en la garganta* y entonces el estomago* y los intestinos*. De ahí, el alcohol está absorbido en la sangre* y circula por todo el cuerpo. Cada lugar en el cuerpo donde esta el agua, el alcohol puede va también.

**For each part of the body affected, stick that body part to the body picture with the Velcro.*

Un lugar que tiene mucha agua es el cerebro*. Normalmente las partes de su cerebro se envían senas, pero cuando alcohol está en su cerebro, algunas de estas senas están obstruidas, por eso el cerebro no funciona correctamente. Lo mas alcohol que está bebido, lo mas alcohol que está en

el cerebro, lo mas senas que son obstruidas. Por eso, lo mas alcohol, lo mas el cerebro no funciona bien.

Para deshacerse del alcohol, el hígado* esta usado. El sangre viaja por el hígado y el hígado cambia la estructura del alcohol. Después de la cambia, el hígado extrae el alcohol del sangre por eso no puede interfiere con su cuerpo. Esto proceso toma una cierta cantidad de tiempo. Los cuerpos de todos son diferentes pero, en general, el hígado puede eliminar una bebida estándar en una hora. No hay manera de acelerar el proceso. Una persona solo puede esperar. Finalmente, el cuerpo se deshace de alcohol por la respiración (cuando usted exhala) y cuando usted orina.

¿Alguien puede mostrarme como el alcohol va por el cuerpo?

Have someone from the audience explain the route of alcohol through the body putting the body parts onto the body picture.

Demasiado Alcohol en Su Cuerpo

¿Puede alguien decirme que es “una bebida” estándar?

Demostración

Cuantas “bebidas” están aquí en esta copa?

*Have one large Mug full of colored water.
Have another mug (the same size) empty
next to it.*

Una bebida estándar es:

Show “one drink” of wine,, beer, liquor.

- Una botella de cerveza de 355mL
- Una copa de vino de 148mL
- 44mL de licor

*Fill empty mug serving by serving until it
matches the full mug.*

Así, esta copa tiene ____ “bebidas” del alcohol.

Así, es difícil para ver cuantas “bebidas” están solo por visto.

¿Que es “demasiado alcohol”?

Para entender que es demasiado alcohol, una persona necesita saber su peso, cuantas bebidas que ha bebida y el tiempo a que empieza beber. Mas alcohol en menos tiempo le hace mas intoxicado.

- La más grande la persona, lo más alcohol él o ella pueden tolerar porque alcohol se absorbe en el cuerpo y lo más cuerpo que usted tiene, lo más usted puede absorber.

While explaining the differences...

*Have big person and small person pretending
to drink same amount. The small person acts
drunk sooner while the big person is still fine.*

- Los hombres y las mujeres tienen los cuerpos diferentes. Como resultado, el alcohol los afecta de manera diferente. Las mujeres se sienten los efectos malos más pronto que hombres.
- Para la mayoría de los hombres, una cantidad segura está acerca de 2 bebidas por día, mientras para la mayoría de las mujeres, una cantidad segura es una bebida por día.

Have male and female pretending to drink same amount. The female acts drunk sooner than the male.

Have male and female pretending to drink same amount. The female acts drunk sooner than the male.

En cantidades pequeñas, como una bebida un día, el alcohol no es peligroso. Pero si usted bebe mucho, como hacen la mayoría de las personas cuando ellos beben, el alcohol puede causar muchos problemas. Porque el alcohol interfiere con las senas del cerebro, bebiendo demasiado alcohol puede causar que una persona pierde el control de su coordinación y el equilibrio. El cerebro controla también juicio por eso cuando beben demasiado, personas suelen decir o hacer las cosas que son malas, dañoso o estúpido porque es difícil decidir si es bueno para hacer o no. El cerebro no está funcionando correctamente.

Have person drinking more and more losing their balance and getting into a fight.

En cantidades grandes, alcohol actúa esencialmente como un veneno al cuerpo. **<Put up “V”>** El hígado no puede eliminarlo mas rápido de una bebida por hora (depende de la persona) así alguien que bebe mas rápido de eso puede poner mas y mas alcohol en el cuerpo para interfiere con el cerebro hasta el cerebro no puede funciona nada. Si usted tiene mucho alcohol en su cuerpo y su cuerpo no puede deshacerse rápidamente, su cuerpo le puede vomitar para rechazar todo el veneno. Si usted sigue beber y beber, su cuerpo hace algo para que pare de beber porque si usted no hace nada, usted podría morir.

Have “drunk” person feeling sick pretending to throw up in a bag. They continue to drink until they fall over.

¿Por que algunas veces una persona vomitar cuando bebe el alcohol?

-Porque demasiado alcohol es veneno y el cuerpo necesita eliminarlo.

La Resaca

Pero si una persona sobrevive después de un noche de beber mucho, la mañana no es divertido. ¿Nos sentimos horribles, no? ¿Por que? El alcohol hace que su cuerpo pierde agua, para que usted se sea deshidratado. El alcohol hace que también el estómago no trabaje correctamente, por eso usted podría vomitar. El agua potable limpia ayuda que su cuerpo obtenga hidrató otra vez y comer un alimento pequeño que es feculento como plátanos puede ayudar que comience el estómago a funcionar correcta otra vez.

Have someone offer drunk person water and food.

Cosas que UD. Puede Hacer Para Ayudar

El comer antes de beber o durante bebiendo puede ayudar. Usted nunca debe beber en ayunas porque el alcohol se absorberá en el estómago en seguida y puede vomitar. Si usted tiene alimento en el estómago, el alcohol no se absorberá tan rápidamente. Puede beber mas lentamente. Asi, va despacio. < **Put up “T”**> Beber mas lentamente puede dar el hígado tiempo para eliminar el alcohol del cuerpo.

Las Problemas Serias

Porque alcohol va por su cuerpo entero, si una mujer está embarazada, entra al bebé también. Las mujeres embarazadas nunca deben beber alcohol porque CUALQUIER cantidad de alcohol podría doler el cuerpo de bebé y su cerebro. < **Put up “N”**> El síndrome fetal de alcohol ocurre cuando una mujer bebe alcohol mientras ella está encinta. El atraso y las deformidades severos pueden ocurrir.

<Put up “O”>

Otro problema que quizás pasa si usted bebe mucho es posible que usted llegue a ser adicto. Si usted es adicto al alcohol, usted se llama un alcohólico.

Puede decirme alguien
¿Qué le hace un alcohólico?

1. Deseo insaciable: una gran necesidad o deseo compulsivo de beber alcohol.
2. Pérdida de control: la incapacidad de dejar de beber alcohol una vez que se haya comenzado.
3. Dependencia física: síndrome de abstinencia, con síntomas tales como náuseas, sudor, temblores y ansiedad, que ocurren cuando se deja de beber alcohol.
4. Tolerancia: la necesidad de beber cada vez más cantidad de alcohol a fin de sentirse eufórico

Alcohol puede dañar también el hígado.

El hígado es importante para limpiar el cuerpo de los venenos. Pero si Ud bebe demasiado alcohol, puede hacer mucho daño a su hígado. Tres síndromes pueden ocurrir:

1. Hígado Graso – Su hígado acumula grasa y no funciona correctamente. No hay senas de esta condición.
2. Hepatitis – su hígado esta inflamado y no funciona correctamente. Una

Opcional

¿Que es lo que hace el hígado?

El hígado hace muchas cosas incluyendo:

- Construye sustancias químicas que el cuerpo necesita para permanecer sano
- Descompone las sustancias perjudiciales como el alcohol y otras sustancias tóxicas (venenosas)
- Elimina los desechos de la sangre
- Y mucho mas

persona puede aparece amarillo y estar cansado.

3. Cirrosis – su hígado obtiene nódulos y no funciona correctamente. Una persona puede aparece amarillo y vomitar la sangre y sus piernas están hinchadas.

Todo de estas síndromes causan que su cuerpo no funcione correctamente. Puede mejorar la condición del hígado por bebiendo menos alcohol. Pero, si uno sigue beber mucho alcohol cuando hay una condición como estas, el o ella puede morir.

¿Cuáles son algunos problemas serios que pueden ocurrir cuando una persona bebe demasiado alcohol?

- El síndrome fetal de alcohol
- Alcohólico
- Los problemas con el hígado

Para recordar las cosas importantes sobre los peligros del alcohol, podemos usar esta palabra:
VINO

¿Puede decirme alguien que es la significa de las letras?

- V** Veneno. Un poquito alcohol es bien, pero demasiado alcohol es veneno.
 - I** Ir despacio. Da su hígado tiempo para eliminar el alcohol.
 - N** Nunca beber mientras embarazada. Una mujer embarazada nunca debe beber el alcohol.
 - O** Otros Problemas. Una persona puede lastimar su cuerpo: el cerebro, el hígado o ser un alcohólico.
-

Review/ Small Groups

Split up into three groups:

1. *Review the body route of alcohol with Velcro body*
 - a. *Have group put on body parts in order of route*
2. *Review what is “one drink” with demo*
 - a. *Pour random amount of “beer”/”wine”/”liquor” and have them determine how many standard drinks it is.*
 - b. *Ask what would happen to Big person vs. Small person; man vs. woman*
3. *Review the serious problems of alcohol with the two actors*
 - a. *Have actors act out drinking while pregnant.*
 - i. *Ask “por que es malo?”*
 - b. *Have actors act out problems with the liver*
 - i. *Ask what they can do to help the condition*

Alcohol Questionnaire

Is drinking alcohol a problem in Rancho al Medio? Why?

What is the main type of alcohol that people drink? Is there a reason why?

Where do most people get alcohol?

Is it expensive?

Do people ever make their own?

At what age do most people start to drink?

When do most people drink? During meals?

Do children ever drink?

When people drink, how much do they usually drink?

From whom do most people find out about alcohol? Parents? Television? Friends?

Why do people drink?

Do people drink when they are sad?

Is drinking looked down upon?

Are people that drink a lot seen as bad?

Do people in the community do anything if someone drinks a lot all the time? Do they keep them away from alcohol?

Are there any programs that people who drink can use if they want to stop? For example, programs from the government?

Are there a lot of advertisements for alcohol around the community? On tv?

Do people die from alcohol ever?

Are there any times when drinking is dangerous?

How often do you drink?

What is one drink?

Fecha: _____ **Edad:** _____

Sexo: _____

1. ¿Ud. Aprendió nueva información? SI / NO

2. ¿Ud. piensa que usará la información que aprendió? SI / NO

3. El programa de salud publica:

no le ayudo le ayudo un poco le ayudo le ayudo mucho

4. Que fue lo que mas le ayudo?

5. Que fue lo que menos le ayudo?

6. Como podemos ser mas efectivos?

7. Que otros tipos de programas necesitan?

8. ¿Tiene comentarios o sugerencias?

Visual Aids



= ?

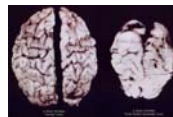
V



I



N



O

