A Response to the HIV/AIDS Epidemic through Culturally/Spiritually Based Programs and Government Intervention in Mexico

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Introduction

Mexico is experiencing a steady increase in the rate of HIV/AIDS infections. The primary factors include familialism, religion, gender roles, and the access to information about preventive measures to reduce the risk of acquiring these conditions. This study evaluates the efficiency of both the Mexican government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in addressing HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment programs. Moving forward, community outreach programs must consider cultural and spiritual factors that play a role in increasing the risk of Latino adolescents falling prey to these infections.

Culturally based programs: Gender disparities in many Latino relationships have negative consequences for HIV prevention in countries like Mexico. Working to counteract cultural preconceptions is a major barrier that must be overcome.

Program should include five essential elements:
1) Use culturally and linguistically appropriate materials and activities emphasizing core Latino cultural values, specifically familialism and gender roles, and how those correspond with safer sex behavior.
2) Incorporate activities that increase knowledge and influence positive attitudes, beliefs, and self-efficacy regarding HIV sexual risk-reduction behaviors.
3) Model and practice the effective use of condoms.
4) Building participants’ skills in problem solving, negotiation of safe sex, and refusal of unsafe sex.
5) Delivering sessions in highly participatory, interactive groups.

Additionally, programs should focus on teaching women to negotiate safe sex, and refusal of unsafe sex.

1) high fertility rates
2) gender role expectations
3) use of condoms.

Results

HIV/AIDS control requires strategies composed of multiple synergistic interventions.

An HIV prevention program in Mexico named Cuidate tested the efficacy of a culture-based intervention to reduce HIV sexual risk behaviors. A protocol was designed for Latino facilitators to deliver education to Latin American women.

Salient aspects of Latino culture were incorporated into the health classes and interventions by discussing:
1) gender-role expectations
2) abstinence or monogamous relationships
3) use of condoms.

Culturally based programs such as Cuidate can impact many communities if brought to a national scale. The program’s results indicate that Cuidate reduced the frequency of sexual intercourse, the number of sexual partners, incidence of unprotected sex, and increased the use of condoms among adolescents. The implementation of Cuidate serves as a successful model for addressing cultural barriers regarding HIV/AIDS in Mexico.

Materials and Methods

Fig. 1 (a) & (b) Both figures demonstrate a comparison between the percentage of condom use by men and women in various sexual practices (vaginal, oral, anal, casual, etc.) in Mexico and Spain. Mexican users minimal protection with a steady partner during anal sex (34%) and during vaginal intercourse (38%). Half the Mexicans in the study reported using systematic sexual protection in casual sex (53%).

Limited sexual education and failure to use contraception contribute to:
1) high fertility rates
2) high percentage of the population acquiring sexually transmitted diseases.
3) hinders the assessment and advancement of a theoretically sound understanding of HIV and AIDS.

Fig. 2. This figure illustrates the way in which HIV derives from a virus that crossed the species barrier into humans. The evolution of the virus over time is traced through a family tree.

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Literature Cited


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