Educating Indigenous Populations in Rural Guatemala about Menstrual Hygiene Management in Collaboration with Days For Girls International

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Educating Indigenous Populations in Rural Guatemala About Menstrual Hygiene

Management in Collaboration with Days for Girls International

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Background

- Days for girls is a non-profit organization with a mission and vision to create a world with dignity, health, and opportunity through menstrual care and health education (International, 2018). They work towards creating a more dignified, humane, and equal world through advocacy, reproductive health awareness, education, and accessible feminine hygiene.
- Research has shown that many girls have to miss school or resort to using rags, mattress stuffing, banana leaves, feathers, cow dung and more, to manage their menstruation (International, 2018).
- The Days for Girls provide women and girls with a safe, washable, and long-lasting alternative along with health education on their female body, menstruation, and reproductive system (International, 2018).
- This kit lasts 2-3 years and will help to replace disposable pads which comes to an average of 360 pads. This program enables women to earn an income and ensure program continuity (International, 2018).

Community Assessment

- The pregnancy rate for young girls in Guatemala has been increasing over the past decade with adolescent (under-20) birth rate of 114 per 1,000 women in rural areas (Valladares, 2012).
- The average age of a woman at the birth of her first child is 21.2 years, compared with the global average of 25-29 (The World Factbook, n.d.).
- 29.1% of Guatemalan adolescent girls aged 15-19 have an unmet need for family planning (World Health Organization, 2017).

Project Statement

The purpose of our project is to educate young females about menstrual hygiene and management, female anatomy, and reproduction cycle.

Implementation

In collaboration with Days for Girls International, students from the College of Nursing at Sacred Heart University implemented a public health project to educate girls in Guatemala about the phases of puberty, menstruation, and the reproductive system. Through the use of teamwork and collaboration with Days for Girls International, this project allowed us to demonstrate and distribute the use of menstruation kits to the girls in the community of Santa Maria de Jesus.

The poster served as a visual teaching tool and helped facilitate a classroom discussion. The school girls, 10 to 14, were able to see informative images that highlighted the signs and symptoms during menstruation, anatomical diagrams, and the Tanner stages of puberty during a 45-minute teaching session by the nursing students and faculty, with the aid of an interpreter. Education included a demonstration on use of the menstrual kit use and provided an opportunity for students to ask questions.

A school in Santa Maria de Jesus, Guatemala, in which the nursing students distributed the Days for Girls kits

A group of students, mostly 6th and 7th graders, receiving and being educated on their Days for Girls kits

Results

We provided education and distributed menstrual kits to girls in two locations in Guatemala. The girls had some, yet limited knowledge about the menstrual cycle and female anatomy. The girls were eager to learn about their bodies and expressed gratitude for their kits. The nursing students and advisors are confident that this project will continue to be implemented during future Guatemala clinical immersions.

Significance of Project

The significance to nursing is improvement of population health. The primary purpose is to educate about the female anatomy, including menstruation, hygiene, and conception. With this education and the Days for Girls kit, the school age girls will have increased knowledge about their bodies.

Literary Review

- Many girls and women of Guatemala have unwanted pregnancies due to the lack of education about sex and their bodies (Wulfhorst, 2017).
- One quarter of the children in Guatemala were born to adolescent mothers in the last five years (Wulfhorst, 2017).
- Between January 2009 and August 2015, there were a total of 405,213 adolescent births (Andrews, 2017).

Cost

All of the kits used for this project were made and donated by Days for Girls International.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the teaching and menstruation kits provided will improve the health of young girls in Guatemala. The nursing students and advisors are confident that this project will continue to be implemented in the future medical mission trips.

Acknowledgements

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