



Podcasts made by medical students as a way to approach the community in times of pandemic: an experience report

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Introduction

The pandemic imposed by the new coronavirus has caused several governments to adopt strict social isolation measures, such as closing public places, stores, malls, restaurants, day care centers, schools and universities. In the academic environment, remote teaching was the way found to give continuity to the school year, however, its implementation was followed by several obstacles, especially in the medical course. The main challenge was to find a way to maintain the link between the medical students and the population. For this, the students, aiming to inform about other diseases that have been neglected due to the pandemic, created a series of podcasts called Health in Motion, addressing in its episodes the Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) and Cancer, with emphasis mainly on prevention and awareness [1-4]. This method of online communication has proven to be an interesting tool to work with, since it is accessible at any time and allows the listener to speed up or slow down the tracks [4,5]. Thus, this study aimed to report the experience produced by creating the script, editing, and publishing podcasts for the community to raise awareness about Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) and Cancer, addressing positive and negative aspects about its production, as well as providing recommendations on how to make the work more effective and overcome obstacles during its realization.

Experience report

On the 04/16/2021 at 8:00 am, we initiated our Community Integration Program (CIP) class, which made it possible to make the podcasts. The class was held remotely by the virtual meeting program Zoom. Our class was separated into simultaneous classes with an

average of 20 students per group, according to our preceptors, and we began to read and discuss the references about the themes that would be covered in our work, with the objective of first creating a concise but complete script about the subjects. The scripts followed a format, which consisted of first presenting what the disease is, followed by its risk factors, and the main focus was on its prevention. During the elaboration, some students did not participate effectively, remaining only silent, while others gave several ideas and pointed out observations in order to keep the script both informative and interesting for the audience. After the scripts were made, we defined who would be the students responsible for narrating and editing the podcasts. At this moment, most of the participants did not want to volunteer to do the narration of the program, so it was necessary to draw lots to decide who would be responsible for voicing the work. The editing of the audio files was done by the software Adobe Audition and proved to be the complicated part of the process, since it is necessary to have some knowledge about the program used, so it was necessary for those responsible for editing to watch some classes available on the internet about the subject. After the audios were edited, they were posted via the Anchor app on various digital platforms such as Spotify, Google Podcasts, and Apple Podcasts.

Reflection about the experience

The creation of podcasts allowed the students to stimulate their social skills and adaptation to new tools. The advantages of making audio files include their low cost and the possibility of unlimited sharing and access by listeners. Furthermore, it is of utmost importance that the academics maintain the link with the community, especially by using a more accessible and dynamic

vocabulary, as was done during our work. Another positive factor is the accessibility of this form of communication, especially for people with visual impairment. It is also worth mentioning the need to address issues such as COPD and cancer, highly prevalent diseases in the world population. In Brazil, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease was the fourth leading cause of death from 2015 to 2016, regarding to the cancer mortality, the country has higher rates than in developed countries, since Brazil is characterized as emerging. Furthermore, due to the pandemic of the new coronavirus, and the measures of social isolation, countless Brazilians have not been diagnosed with cancer, thus contributing to an increase in the mortality rates of the disease in the coming years in the country. Such data confirm the importance of projects that address these diseases, especially during the pandemic, in which the media and health actions are focused on Covid-19. However, some challenges were also encountered during the making of the podcasts, such as the difficulty among the students to decide who would be responsible for narrating the project, since most were embarrassed to take on this role, and the lack of interest by other participants in the group. Another problem we faced was the promotion of the material, which we believe was not sufficient enough to reach a large number of people.

Conclusion or recommendations

The podcasts are of great value to inform the population about health-related topics and bring them closer to the medical students, however, it is necessary to elaborate a marketing scheme that is more efficient for the dissemination of the material. We would recommend a workshop conducted by an expert in marketing strategies, preferably digital, who could teach students the best way to promote their project to the community and the tools that can make the podcast content more dynamic and attractive to listeners. Moreover, it is important that students are willing to get out of their comfort zone and participate in these types of projects, overcoming their fears and insecurities. Ideally, there could be a lecture given by a communication specialist, such as a journalist or an actor, who demonstrates techniques to improve vocalization and diction for the time of the recording.

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Data sharing statement

No additional data are available.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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