

The democratization of information in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic: necessary dialogues between health education and communication*

*A democratização da informação, no contexto da pandemia por COVID-19: diálogos necessários entre educação em saúde e comunicação**

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ABSTRACT: *Introduction:* The “Viva Mais” extension project produces radio programs for health education. In 2020, its contents addressed the COVID-19 pandemic. *Objectives:* Demonstrate the importance of educommunication in health, through what was experienced by “Viva Mais”. *Methodology:* The team met via Google Meet to discuss each episode. Surveys, recordings and interviews with experts were carried out. Then, the episodes were formatted, with subsequent placement on streaming platforms and social media. *Experience Report and Results:* The team’s new production routine is reported, differentiating the pre and post physical isolation realities, the challenges in keeping each episode updated and the project results, with more than 500 podcast views. *Conclusion:* It is necessary to bring trustworthy information within reach of the population, in order to encourage them to consume real information and not share false messages. This is the social role of “Viva Mais”.

Keywords: Coronavirus infections; Pandemics; Health education; Webcast; Radio.

RESUMO: *Introdução:* O projeto de extensão “Viva Mais” produz programas de rádio para educação em saúde. Em 2020, seus conteúdos abordaram a pandemia de COVID-19. *Objetivos:* Demonstrar a importância da educomunicação em saúde, por meio do que foi experimentado pelo “Viva Mais”. *Metodologia:* A equipe se reuniu via *Google Meet*, para debater cada episódio. Foram feitas pesquisas, gravações e entrevistas com especialistas. Em seguida, os episódios eram formatados, com subsequente veiculação em plataformas de *streaming* e mídias sociais. *Relato de Experiência e Resultados:* Relata-se a nova rotina de produção da equipe, diferenciando as realidades pré e pós isolamento físico, os desafios em manter cada episódio atualizado e os resultados do projeto, com mais de 500 visualizações dos *podcasts*. *Conclusão:* É preciso trazer informações fidedignas ao alcance da população, a fim de encorajá-la a consumir informações reais e a não compartilhar mensagens falsas. É este o papel social do “Viva Mais”.

Palavras-chave: Infecções por coronavírus; Pandemias; Educação em saúde; Webcast; Rádio.

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INTRODUCTION

The “Viva Mais” Extension Project, created in 2018 at the Federal University of Ouro Preto (UFOP), originated from an academic work carried out by a group of medical students. Due to its potential for health education, it became an extension action. Health education is currently understood as a process of knowledge construction that contributes to the autonomy of the subjects involved¹, in order to make them protagonists of their own care. Thus, it was thought that the best way to reach the Ouro Preto community would be through the radio, after all, in rural areas and distant regions, the penetration of radio surpasses that of television¹. Thus, a partnership was established between UFOP School of Medicine and UFOP *Educativa Radio*, in which the project team participates in all stages of content production, from research and writing of episodes, followed by evaluation and adaptation to the radio language until their subsequent broadcast.

This interdisciplinary format, which the extension action presents, is of paramount importance, as it builds a non-fragmented learning, a vision that encompasses the human being², which reinforces the work of the health professional articulated to the social context of his patient, fleeing of the current corporatist work culture².

Thus, since the beginning of “Viva Mais” project, several thematic axes were carried out, such as the Brazilian’s Public Health System – *Sistema Único de Saúde* (SUS), the implications of the use of alcohol and drugs, the digestive system neoplasms and the health of the LGBTQIA+ population, always bringing an innovative vision and as less prescriptive as possible. However, as of March 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) raised the status of pandemic the New Coronavirus contamination, at the same time as the first cases of the disease were identified in Brazilian territory. UFOP, among other public institutions, suspended the academic calendar and in-person activities.

The COVID-19 pandemic has been tackled like no other before. The interconnected, confined, news-hungry world fueled the massive placement of content. However, not all of these were highly reliable. This excess of information, which spreads quickly and reduces access to reliable sources, is called by the WHO as “infodemia”³. People, in general, do not have the habit, the knowledge or even the resources to check the information they receive, passing them on blindly, in order to transform the uninformed person into a misinformation spreader³. YouTube, for example, the widely known video platform, was inundated with all types of production, most not coming from prestige health vehicles, such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) or the WHO⁴. Thinking about this underrepresentation of scientific entities, in digital media and the influence that these platforms currently have⁴, the

extension project “Viva Mais” had to adapt to the remote work context and began its production and dissemination of precise content that addressed various interfaces between health, coexistence, economy and society, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, in order to reach the community, fight misinformation and provide health education, the latter being its main purpose.

OBJECTIVE

To elucidate the importance of disseminating educational materials through the radio, with an emphasis on the “Viva Mais” project, especially in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The project seeks to raise the awareness of listeners in relation to collective health, through multidisciplinary work between teams in the areas of health and communication and the use of accessible language to the public.

METHODOLOGY

Thanks to the rapid dissemination of the new coronavirus, SARS-CoV-2, and the need for reliable and easily accessible information to the population, the production of the extension project “Viva Mais” turned to addressing the most important issues that generated the most doubts in the population referring to this new disease, COVID-19.

Seeking a way to maintain the quality of information, along with the elucidation of scientific language for listeners who are not familiar with academic terms, 10 podcasts were designed and created, addressing the new pandemic, which were broadcast by UFOP *Educativa Radio* and by social medias, such as Instagram and Facebook, and audio streaming platforms such as Spotify.

The democratization of information through the Internet, radio and social media has become an ally of health care. However, misinformation generated by sharing non-factual, incorrect and misleading information creates a threat and makes it difficult to provide truthful information during a public health emergency, as is the case with the Covid-19 pandemic⁵.

For this reason, we sought to ensure the impartiality and veracity of information about Covid19 in the production of podcasts. For this purpose, weekly meetings were held, remotely, via the Google Meet platform, and systematic surveys of information were carried out, with discussion of themes and evaluation of pertinent information. After the surveys, each program was written, presenting experts in the covered topics and also with doubts and concerns of the population about the pandemic.

After the writing of each podcast and its review by the team members, the programs were recorded, remotely, with the help of the participants phones in each episode. The recordings followed the guidelines of the project’s

communication team, to ensure the sound quality of all recordings, made by guests and announcers of the programs. When completed, the recordings were sent to the production, by UFOP radio, of the final product, launched on the project's and Radio's platforms and social media, accompanied by flashy and informative posts, on the project's Instagram and Facebook, in order to invite the audience to listen to the podcast.

In addition to carrying out the programs, the team also monitored the hits that the podcasts had on Spotify and Instagram and Facebook.

EXPERIENCE REPORT AND RESULTS

The project, arising from the union of an academic group in the health area (Medicine) and another in the area of communication (Journalism), which complement each other with their respective knowledge and technical skills, results in the production of content with focus on health education. The preparation of the materials, above all, took place in an innovative way, due to the social distancing brought by the Covid-19 pandemic, which was only made possible thanks to the project members' access to the internet and technological knowledge, such as social networks and streaming platforms, crucial for the creation of relevant content for the dissemination of health in a decentralized and non-hierarchical way, as well as for the access of the listeners to this material, with access to these communication technologies. In this context, it is worth emphasizing the importance of the democratization of technology and access to information as important post-contemporary tools for health promotion, since, with the transformation that society has been going through in recent years, mainly based on the popularization of the internet and from its instruments (social media, for example), people gained enormous empowerment and the ability to be promoters of their own health and well-being⁶, especially with regard to the prevention of health-disease processes, in this context, related to the new coronavirus. It is important to highlight the challenge for all project members to translate all the work previously done, mostly in person and traditionally, to a completely different platform, in entirely remote ways, using the internet as an even more fundamental tool.

The estimated population of Ouro Preto is 74,824 inhabitants. However, the project's target audience goes far beyond that. Thus, under the supervision of Eloisa Helena de Lima and Gláucio Santos, during the production of the podcasts, the stimulus to their consumption was disseminated on all the social networks of UFOP *Educativa Radio*, including the Facebook page and the project's Instagram profile.

Podcasts began to be produced right at the beginning of the pandemic, in mid-March 2020, and continued periodically until the end of October 2020. Therefore, their

evolution made each episode relate to the temporal context of the beginning of the fear and spread of the disease, its deeper and more rational understanding, and its later consequences.

All podcast episodes were made available on the web from the Anchor platform. Therefore, its tools allow the dissemination of content on the following streaming services: Spotify, Deezer, Apple Podcast and Google Podcast.

Due to the urgency of disseminating the contents presented in each product, the frequency of dissemination between March and November was 1.6 episodes per month. In the first month, three podcasts were aired; in June, two; in July, one; in August, one; in September, one; and in the last month (October), two.

Aiming to meet the emergency demands about infection by the new coronavirus, the first episode launched by the project addressed concepts about the disease and its agent, with what was known so far. The episode lasted 8 minutes and 42 seconds and had the participation of Estevão Portela Nunes, Deputy Director of Clinical Services at the Evandro Chagas National Institute of Infectious Diseases, Emanuel Maltempi de Souza from the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology at UFPR (Federal University of Paraná) and of Paulo César Corrêa, pulmonologist and Professor at the UFOP School of Medicine. For this episode, the FIOcruz portal, The New York Time Magazine and the TV of the Federal University of Paraná were used as theoretical references.

The second episode addressed the symptoms of Covid-19, it lasted 11 minutes and 59 seconds and featured speeches by Liliane Souto Pacheco, an infectious disease physician; Paulo César Corrêa, pulmonologist and Professor at the UFOP School of Medicine; and Luiz Henrique Mandetta, orthopedist and Brazil's Health Minister from January 2019 to April 2020. PUBMED, Uptodate Platform, SciELO and the website covid.saude.gov.br were used as theoretical bases.

The third episode talked about prevention measures against COVID-19, lasting 9 minutes and 23 seconds, and featured the participation of Carolina Ali Santos, an infectious disease physician and professor at the UFOP School of Medicine and Professor Jonas Brant from the Collective Health Department at the University of Brasília. As theoretical reference, the World Health Organization, Brazil's Ministry of Health and TV UNB were used.

The fourth episode addressed the issues of COVID-19 protocols and treatments, lasted 7 minutes and 6 seconds, had as references articles published in Science Magazine and had the participation of Luís Fernando Lourençone, Otorhinolaryngologist and professor at the Faculty of Medicine from the University of São Paulo, in an interview with TV USP; Raimundo Marques, Cardiologist and professor at the Faculty of Medicine at the Federal University of Ouro Preto; and Luís Menezes, nutritionist

and master's student in the health and nutrition program at the Federal University of Ouro Preto. TV USP, the World Health Organization and the Ministry of Health served as theoretical references for the production of this episode.

The fifth episode addresses the vulnerable public affected by the New Coronavirus, lasts 9 minutes and 44 seconds and features the speeches of Fabiana Maksud, endocrinologist and professor at the Federal University of Ouro Preto; by doctor Beatriz Vasconcelos, in an interview with TV Câmara; Paulo César Corrêa, pulmonologist and Professor at the School of Medicine of the Federal University of Ouro Preto; and Ana Luísa Penna, pediatric hematologist and professor at the Federal University of Ouro Preto. As a theoretical source, news and reports from Brazil's Ministry of Health, the World Health Organization and the Brazilian Society of Diabetes were used.

The sixth episode produced by the team dealt with the impact of the pandemic on the economy, as a result of the fervent debate that has spread in Brazil between economy and health. This episode, which lasted 10 minutes and 12 seconds, had the participation of Professor of Economics at UFOP, Chrystian Mendes; the economist and professor of the economics at UFOP, Tiago Barros; and the economist and professor of the Economic Sciences course at the Federal University of Goiás (UFG), Everton Rosa; all of them in an interview with our team. To write the script for this podcast, several reports were analyzed, coming from the magazines of the Globo Group and CNN Business, and even the speech of the minister of economy, Paulo Guedes, made on March 27th 2020, in which the minister seeks to explain to the population what measures would be taken to alleviate the economic crisis faced by the country, whether in relation to individuals or legal entities.

The seventh episode of the series about COVID-19 addressed the controversy over social isolation, seen as an attempt to curb contagion by one part of the population and seen as the target of harsh criticism from another part. The seventh program, lasting 13 minutes and 42 seconds, had the participation of the veterinarian Cláudio Rodrigues and the Anápolis Vôlei player, Lucas Gil, as witnesses of the effects of social isolation in their lives. As specialists, the professor at the School of Law, Tourism and Museology at UFOP, Alissandra de Carvalho; nutritionist, doctor in nursing and professor at the UFOP School of Medicine, Ísis Machado; and Carolina Ali Santos, an infectious disease physician and professor at the UFOP School of Medicine, all in an interview with the Viva Mais team. The theoretical bases used to write the episode include journalistic articles from newspapers such as *Folha de São Paulo* and *Estado de Minas* and official announcements from the World Health Organization (WHO) on how and what measures of social distancing to take.

The eighth podcast on the new coronavirus explored the possibility of vaccination, a source of euphoria and high expectations for the world population, which, in mid-

2020, was not yet concrete and the plans for a program capable of immunizing the entire world population were big challenges to overcome. The episode lasted 16 minutes and 53 seconds and had the participation of the well-known infectious disease specialist Carolina Ali Santos, who participated in several other episodes; the physician specialized in clinical and intensive care medicine, also a professor at the UFOP School of Medicine, Jacques Gabriel Horta; the infectious disease physician, professor at the Faculty of Medicine of the Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG) and member of the Committees for Combating Coronavirus at UFMG and the Municipality of Belo Horizonte, Unai Tupinambás; and José Geraldo Leite Ribeiro, physician and professor at the Faculty of Health and Human Ecology at UFMG; interviewed by our writing team. Also, the episode features the testimony of Dimas Covas, director of the Butantan Institute, at a press conference for the Government of São Paulo, broadcast on state television; and Cristiana Toscano, infectious disease physician, professor at UFG and member of the WHO Committee for Combating Coronavirus, in an interview with CanalSaúde at FIOCRUZ; both public domain reports are available on the YouTube platform. In this episode, theoretical bases from reports from the *Folha de São Paulo* newspaper and articles from the PUBMED platform were used.

The ninth episode of the series addressed the increase in alcohol and drug consumption during the social isolation caused by the pandemic and the relationship between substance abuse and the development of psychological disorders. The episode lasted 13 minutes and 14 seconds and had the participation of doctors working in the Ouro Preto region, such as Ariosvaldo Figueiredo Santos Filho, physician and former health secretary of Ouro Preto, and Alexandre Costa Val, psychiatrist and professor at the UFOP School of Medicine. In addition, the episode also featured the participation of Marcelo Dalla Vecchia, master in collective health and professor of the Psychology Department at the Federal University of São João del Rei. To carry out the episode, in addition to the experts' speeches, news from the website of the School of Continuing Education, *Hospital das Clínicas*, Faculty of Medicine, USP, was used as a theoretical basis for the text.

In the tenth episode of the series about the coronavirus, the topic addressed was the increase in violence against women in the COVID-19 pandemic. Lasting 32 minutes and 38 seconds, the episode featured the participation of women engaged in protecting women victims of domestic violence, such as Professor Elaine Machado, psychologist, epidemiologist and professor at the Department of Preventive and Social Medicine at the Faculty of Medicine of UFMG, Larah, harm reducer and trans woman, in an interview with *Rádio UFOP Educativa*, nurse Hozanan Passos, Flora Rodrigues Gonçalves, anthropologist and researcher at the UFMG Gender and

Sexuality Research Group, Débora Queiroz, activist and president of *União Brasileira das Mulheres - Núcleo Ouro Preto*, and Cláudia Natividade, psychologist, teacher and consultant specialized in domestic violence. In addition to the speeches by active women, news sources from the Federal Government's online portal were also used, as well as information about laws, on Federal Government websites, in addition to articles by FIOcruz Minas and SciELO.

Regarding the results, which were extremely satisfactory, given the difficulty and the need to readjust the work models and the approach contents, in total, 202 views were achieved on Instagram, 146 on Facebook and 301 views on Spotify, a specific streaming platform. As all of these are free to use platforms, the numbers serve to show the importance of free promotion of content focused on the health education theme, being a relevant tool for health promotion and placing the population as protagonists of their own generation of well-being and quality of life. Thus, the project reflects on how important it is to disconnect from the idea that traditional health tools (health professionals, hospitals, health posts) are the only drivers of health generation through curative and resolving action. With the advent of technologies and the 4.0 world, innovative and decentralized tools have been gaining ground in this generation⁶, such as the production of content aimed at health education via streaming and via radio.

Strategies similar to what we developed in "Viva Mais" have been adopted in other spaces. According to Pinto et al.⁸, the use of these innovative tools represent instruments that can help in the health education process, emphasizing the importance of interaction and creativity to provide quality information about health.

According to Silva⁹ and Lopes et al.⁷, the use of podcasts as information and communication technology in health education constitutes an excellent strategy, although there is a finding that these tools still remain underused in the transmission of content in courses at Health area.

This finding calls for the attention of educators, students and other social actors involved in the process of knowledge production and transmission of quality information in education and health, supporting the thesis that individuals, and not just the State or collective organizations, they can also be a central character in your

generation of comfort and well-being, mainly through education. In view of the social inequalities existing in Brazil, this perspective considers the individual role of each subject to be healthy towards the promotion of individual and collective health, but continuously reiterating the social role of the State and public policies in strengthening actions to reduce the various forms of vulnerability that may present themselves in scenarios like the one we are experiencing. Furthermore, this change in perspective is also highly viable for the health system itself, as the number of individuals who need care, treatment or any other type of intervention is considerably reduced only with awareness, education and changes in habits, the pillars of preventive medicine proposed in the health education project developed⁶.

CONCLUSION

The use of radio, streaming platforms and social media as a form of health education is of paramount importance for the dissemination of knowledge, as it eliminates physical and socioeconomic barriers. Thus, the "Viva Mais" project, through an interdisciplinary work, used this means of communication to bring qualified health information to the citizens of the *Inconfidentes* region, other listeners of *UFOP Educativa Radio* and followers of the project's social media.

As discussed above, during the pandemic, problems of an informative nature were observed in society, increasing the importance of educational actions during this period. In addition, the relevance of the project is reflected in its versatility: ability to adapt your work to the remote context and production of high-quality episodes, always reliable and up-to-date. "Viva Mais", even with a small university production, was able to reach more than 500 views on all its platforms, in the period from March to November 2020, an achievement for this type of media.

It is noticeable how the population manages to consume information from well-known vehicles, such as health organizations and universities, what is needed is only to encourage them to do so and this is the social role of "Viva Mais", to make the content accessible for all, in order to fight an epidemic as lethal as that of COVID-19: that of disinformation.

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