

INTEGRATED ACTION FOR CANCER EDUCATION, PREVENTION, AND SCREENING: PINK OCTOBER

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ABSTRACT

Breast cancer is a major public health problem among Brazilian women, responsible for high morbidity and mortality rates. Early diagnosis is essential for successful treatment and improved quality of life, and primary health care plays a central role in promoting preventive and educational actions. In this context, the Pink October campaign stands out as a global awareness movement. Objective: To promote educational and preventive actions aimed at raising awareness and early screening for breast and cervical cancer through integrated action between academics, health professionals, and the local community.

Methodology: This is a descriptive study based on an experience report from a Pink October campaign in a municipality in Tocantins, conducted by medical students and the Academic League of Gynecology and Obstetrics of Afya Faculdade Porto Nacional (LAGOP). The initiative focused on breast cancer prevention, with lectures, training sessions, and clinical consultations for women in the community.

Results: The initiative involved 80 women, with 18 PCCU collections and clinical breast examinations performed. Conclusion: The experience strengthened the bond between students, professionals, and the community, promoting awareness about self-care and early detection of diseases. In addition to expanding access to health services, the initiative contributed to the training of future doctors who are more sensitive

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and committed to the reality of the SUS, highlighting the ongoing importance of educational and preventive actions in controlling breast cancer and promoting women's overall health.

Keywords: Primary Care; Women; Screening.



INTRODUCTION

Breast cancer and cervical cancer represent significant public health problems in Brazil, accounting for high morbidity and mortality rates among women. Their epidemiological relevance is evidenced by estimates from the National Cancer Institute (INCA), which annually projects more than 66,000 new cases of breast cancer and approximately 17,000 cases of cervical cancer (Brazil, 2023). Given this scenario, the need for continuous strategies for prevention, screening, and early diagnosis is reinforced, aiming to reduce mortality and strengthen Comprehensive Women's Health Care, especially within Primary Health Care (PHC), the main gateway to the Unified Health System (SUS) (Schuler et al., 2024).

Early diagnosis is one of the determining factors for therapeutic success and improved quality of life for women affected by these neoplasms (Teixeira; Gondinho, 2022). In this context, PHC plays an essential role in implementing educational and preventive actions, promoting self-care and equitable access to health services. Professionals and students in the field assume a leading role in promoting awareness, especially during public campaigns such as Pink October, which mobilizes society around the importance of prevention and early diagnosis (Melo et al., 2021; Barbosa et al., 2024).

The Pink October campaign, consolidated as a global movement, emphasizes clinical breast examination, mammography, and cervical cytology (PCCU) as fundamental screening strategies (Hehn, 2023). Beyond its symbolic character, the movement represents a space for dialogue and health education. In this scenario, university extension stands out as an instrument for articulating teaching, research, and society, enabling the practical application of scientific knowledge and the training of professionals committed to social demands. According to Sá, Monici, and Conceição (2022), extension projects contribute to the technical and human development of students. Academic Leagues, in turn, emerge as privileged spaces for this integration, guided by the principle of inseparability between teaching, research, and extension, offering students opportunities for theoretical-practical learning and community engagement (Botelho et al., 2013; Silva; Flores, 2015).

Considering the importance of screening in PHC and the potential of university extension in social mobilization, this study aims to analyze the experience of an extension activity developed by the Academic League of Gynecology and Obstetrics of Porto Nacional (LAGOP) during the Pink October campaign in a municipality in Tocantins. Guiding Question: What is the contribution and impact of an extension activity in promoting awareness and early screening for breast and cervical cancer, and in strengthening the bond between university and community?

General Objective: To analyze the experience of an extension activity by LAGOP, describing the activities carried out and assessing its contribution to promoting educational and preventive actions.

Specific Objectives: Describe awareness and screening activities; Report the methodology and scope of



community mobilization; Discuss the relevance of integrating teaching, research, extension, and community in academic training.

The relevance of this study lies in the need to highlight the active and transformative role of the university in public health. The detailed record of this experience significantly contributes to the literature by demonstrating how an extension activity serves as a powerful vector for health promotion. This work illustrates the practical application of theoretical knowledge about the importance of early diagnosis and the effectiveness of social mobilization in community engagement. Furthermore, by linking theory to practice, the study underscores the invaluable value of experience in Academic Leagues for the human and technical development of future professionals. Thus, this project is justified by its ability to train students aligned with the principles of the Unified Health System (SUS) and deeply committed to women's comprehensive health and societal demands..

METHODOLOGY

This work is configured as an experience report that details and analyzes the planning and execution stages of a university extension activity focused on women's health. The applied methodology integrates the dimensions of teaching, research, and extension, being fundamental for academic training and community impact.

TYPE AND NATURE OF THE STUDY

This experience report is characterized as a descriptive study with a qualitative approach. The objective is to describe in detail the planning process, execution logistics, and activities developed during the health action in a municipality in Tocantins, offering an in-depth view of the students' experience and the impact on the community.

SETTING AND POPULATION (SAMPLE)

The extension activity took place in a primary health care unit in a municipality in the state of Tocantins (TO). The event was planned with an open invitation to the entire community, characterized as a convenience sample of free demand. The total participation was approximately 80 people, with 18 patients attended for cervical cytology (PCCU) collection and breast evaluation.

ORGANIZATION AND PARTNERSHIPS

The activity was organized by fourth-period medical students within the scope of the Interdisciplinary Practices of Extension and Teaching (PIEPE) course, which aims to articulate teaching and extension focused on community health. The Academic League of Gynecology and Obstetrics of



Porto Nacional (LAGOP) was invited to collaborate as a technical partner, assuming an active role in both student training and field execution.

PREPARATION TECHNIQUES AND INSTRUMENTS

Como técnica de preparação e instrumento de garantia de qualidade técnica, a LAGOP promoveu uma capacitação teórica e prática para os acadêmicos. O treinamento foi conduzido por uma médica especialista em Ginecologia e focou na padronização dos procedimentos clínicos.

Training content

During this session, the following were addressed in detail: humanized patient reception, collection of essential data in anamnesis, step-by-step PCCU collection, breast evaluation technique, and correct completion of the cytology request form. The training was crucial for students to act safely and proficiently during the activity.

FLOW AND EXECUTION OF FIELD ACTION

The development of the activity at the site followed a structured care flow to optimize time and service quality. The steps were:

Stages of care

Reception and Welcome of Patients; Recording of Information on the medical history form; Escorting Patients to the procedure room; Performance of Breast Examination and Collection of PCCU by the technical team.

Role of LAGOP in the execution

LAGOP members were responsible for managing the flow, from receiving medical history forms and escorting patients to welcoming them during the procedure and providing direct support in performing the collections, acting under supervision and ensuring the safety and technical quality of the screening process.

EDUCATIONAL AND PEDAGOGICAL STRATEGIES

Educational activities were used as the main technique for disseminating information. These included lectures and interactive dynamics, such as games and quizzes, planned with a clear pedagogical purpose: to promote awareness and prevention of cervical and breast cancer. The educational content



addressed early diagnosis, vaccination (HPV), self-care, and the importance of information dissemination within the community.

METHODOLOGICAL DISCUSSION

The methodology adopted in this report, based on teaching, extension, and care practice, proves highly effective for the proposed objectives. The integration of LAGOP with the PIEPE discipline enabled a virtuous cycle: formal training enhanced students' clinical competence; supervised care practice (PCCU collection) strengthened practical skills in gynecology; and educational activities ensured health information dissemination and positive community impact. This model not only promotes education and prevention in women's health but also fulfills the university's social function, training professionals more committed and fully prepared for SUS demands.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The experience of the extension activity developed by the Academic League of Gynecology and Obstetrics of Porto Nacional (LAGOP) in a municipality in Tocantins generated significant findings in three interconnected spheres: academic training, community adherence to screening, and logistical challenges in public health. Interpreting these results allows for an in-depth analysis of the effectiveness of university extension methodology in the context of women's health.

IMPACT ON ACADEMIC TRAINING AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

One of the main findings of the study lies in the enhancement of student learning through direct engagement with the population, reaffirming the potential of extension as an active methodology in the educational process. Field experience enabled students to apply theoretical knowledge concretely, especially regarding PCCU collection, clinical breast examination, anamnesis, and patient reception. Prior training conducted by a specialist was crucial to ensure technical safety and standardization of procedures. This result aligns with the literature, which asserts that clinical skills develop not only through study but through conscious repetition in real scenarios (Lima et al., 2023; Dias et al., 2024).

In addition to technical improvement, the development of humanistic competencies such as empathy, effective communication, and professional demeanor stood out. These attributes are considered essential for a humanized medical practice aligned with the principles of the Unified Health System (SUS) (Berchet; Guanais, 2021; Corrêa et al., 2022), demonstrating that extension acts as a vehicle for the comprehensive training of future health professionals.



EFFECTIVENESS OF SCREENING ACTIONS AND LINKAGE WITH PHC

The role of Primary Health Care (PHC) was evident as the structuring axis of the activity. The integration between the local health unit, students, and the community showed that prevention is strengthened when care is accessible, territorialized, and linked to the population's reality (Berchet; Guanais, 2021).

Community adherence and response

There was good adherence to the event, with approximately 80 participants and 17 PCCU collections performed. This data demonstrates the population's interest and need when service provision is combined with health education (Lima et al., 2023). The model that combined lectures, interactive dynamics, and clinical care reinforces the thesis that symbolic campaigns such as Pink October gain real impact when associated with expanded access to diagnostic procedures, rather than mere abstract awareness (Dias et al., 2024; Lombaldo, 2023).

The challenge of continuity of care

A crucial advancement of this experience was overcoming the common limitation of one-off actions by ensuring a system for returning test results. Thanks to a partnership with a private laboratory, PCCU results were delivered within thirty days, reinforcing continuity of care and facilitating timely referrals in altered cases. This measure is fundamental for effective prevention, reducing the risk of loss to follow-up (Corrêa et al., 2022).

LIMITATIONS AND PERSPECTIVES FOR PERMANENT EXTENSION

Despite positive results, the experience revealed limitations inherent to episodic interventions. The activity had limited reach compared to the population size, indicating that isolated actions, no matter how well planned, do not replace permanent large-scale screening strategies (Dias et al., 2024). Furthermore, a possible selection bias was identified, as participants tend to be women with greater prior interest in their health, leaving out those with less access or risk perception (Corrêa et al., 2022).

Educational and organizational strategies

Educational dynamics proved to be an efficient and well-accepted tool, making content lighter and more applicable (Lombaldo, 2023). To increase reach, it is suggested to include simple printed materials and train community health agents as information multipliers. These measures aim to ensure continuity of health education and strengthen the bond between the community and health services (Berchet; Guanais, 2021).



From an organizational perspective, the experience highlighted the importance of standardizing workflows, defining responsibilities for each stage, and articulating with municipal management. Additionally, there is an opportunity to transform these field actions into applied research, generating data on community perception and screening indicators.

CONCLUSION

The action by LAGOP in a municipality in Tocantins successfully fulfilled the proposed pedagogical, care, and social objectives. The main results demonstrate the effectiveness of the extension methodology and reinforce the essential nature of preventive actions and health promotion for women within Primary Care: Formative Impact: The experience showed that university extension is a key component in medical education, acting as an active methodology that enhances learning, strengthens preventive actions, and allows students to apply theoretical knowledge, especially in PCCU collection, clinical breast examination, and patient reception. Essential attributes such as empathy and professional demeanor stood out; Strengthening Prevention: Performing PCCU collection and clinical breast examinations enabled the screening of possible alterations and strengthened the bond between the health team, medical students, and the local community.

The action corroborates the power of preventive measures in the territory and the impact of campaigns such as Pink October when associated with expanded access to services; Community Empowerment: The relevance of health education through university extension was reinforced as an essential tool for encouraging self-care and female empowerment, contributing significantly to early disease detection; Guarantee of Continuity: A crucial differentiator was the structuring of a system for returning test results in partnership with a laboratory, ensuring continuity of care and facilitating timely referrals, overcoming one of the main limitations of one-off actions. The central contribution of this report is to reinforce that prevention requires continuity, bonding, and shared responsibility, acting as a model that articulates teaching, service, and community with tangible benefits for all parties involved.

The experience, although successful, revealed gaps that guide the prospect of future studies: Long-Term Impact Research: Conduct quantitative studies to measure the long-term impact of these actions on community perception of prevention and screening indicators (coverage rate) before and after the intervention. Development of Educational Tools: Investigate the effectiveness of different educational materials, such as self-care flowcharts and simple apps, to help maintain health education after the extension team leaves. Sustainability Models: Explore partnership and logistics models to transform one-off actions into permanent large-scale screening strategies, including strengthening the training of community health agents as information multipliers. Initiatives of this nature should be continuously



encouraged so that the challenge of transforming a one-time action into permanent impact is overcome, contributing more significantly to Brazilian public health.



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