



## Social Science

### OC 3 ENGAGEMENT OF YOUNGER GENERATIONS IN THE FIGHT AGAINST HIV/AIDS

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**Background:** #cHIVvuoiconoscere is a project to promote sensitization, information and formation about HIV/AIDS in high schools aiming to improve the knowledge about the prevention, increment the acceptability of screening tests and fight the stigma.

The initiative is connected to the Bergamo Fast-Track City network that involves the Municipality, the Representative Council of Mayors, the Territorial School Office, ASST Papa Giovanni XXIII, the Bergamo ATS, Arcigay Bergamo-Cives, The Italian red cross Bergamo Committee, the Caritas Diocesana Bergamasca and the associations La Melarancia, ALT, Coop. di Bessimo, Coop. Il Pugno Aperto, Coop. L'Impronta.

**Methods:** The project, started in Oct. 2019, involves 18 High Schools and about 2000 students through interactive programs. The courses ( 3 meetings of 2 hours each) for single classes are evaluated by means of a pre- and post-intervention questionnaire, borrowed from those of the AIDS project of Caritas Italiana. The questionnaire includes 9 questions on scientific aspects of HIV infection, 7 about the perception of infective risk and stigma and a final part with socio-demographic variables.

Besides, we offer students to participate in an art contest submitting works aiming at the prevention of infection, the promotion of testing and the fight of stigma. The prized art-works will be used to run a sensitization campaign both for their peers and for the general population.

**Results:** The preliminary analysis based on about 1000 pre- and post-intervention questionnaires allows an interesting evaluation of efficacy.

Particularly significant is, as an example, the concept U=U: if before the formation process only 40% of the students thinks that the statement "A person with HIV that is successfully treated does not transmit the infection through unprotected sex" is true after the intervention the same proportion raises to 84%. Similarly, if before 36% of the teenagers thinks that HIV can be transmitted through saliva, the proportion drops to 3% after the intervention (all differences  $P < 0.001$ ).

More difficult is to cope with stigma. Nevertheless, it is significant that a question like "Do you think that it is appropriate for a person living with HIV to work with children?" being the possible choices in the range from 0 (not at all) to 10 (yes, absolutely) the proportion of negative responses is 71% before the intervention, while drops to 32% after it. Again, at the question "would you feel uneasy staying close to a person with HIV?" 58% of the participants declared that they do not feel uneasy before the training intervention and becomes 80% after the intervention (all differences  $P < 0.001$ ).

**Conclusion:** Data of all questionnaires, the outcomes of the art contest and of the final sensitization campaign will give the comprehensive picture. In the meantime, we believe that bet on younger generations is a winning strategy to obtain 2030 WHO endpoints to end the HIV epidemics and defeat stigma.