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COMMUNITARIAN CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE STIGMA OF SCHIZOPHRENIA: "BE ON THE STAGE"

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The use of cultural approaches addressing stigma and discrimination promotes acceptance by raising consciousness. People with schizophrenia are often stigmatized by others. Discrimination associated with common myths contributes to social exclusion and treatment delay, creating a barrier to recovery.This paper aims to present the development, implementation and evaluation of an anti-stigma campaign in the context of primary health care and local community using theatrical techniques.

In the Health Centre waiting rooms the invisible theatre technique was implemented, consisting in the performance of a previously rehearsed script without informing the public that it was a play, aiming to provoke debate and clarify problems related to social inequality and discrimination. The play script addressed common myths related to schizophrenia: People with schizophrenia are usually dangerous and violent; People with schizophrenia are unlikely to recover; Schizophrenia, as other mental conditions is a sign of weakness and not a true medical illness and others. In the local community, street performances were implemented based on image theatre techniques consisting in the use of living body imagery to address the myths described above.

Behavioural responses to the intervention were assessed using Likert type scale. Most of the people in both the settings were paying attention to the performances and dialogues. People watching street performances, however, were more active in expressing opinions or making specific questions related to the subject.

Further research on the impact of anti-stigma campaigns using theatre techniques is needed. These strategies may provide an effective approach to fight stigma in communitarian settings.