Observed Use of Standard Precautions in Chilean Community Clinics
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Abstract

In Chile, little information about the use of standard precautions (SP) among health care workers (HCWs) exists. As part of a larger study to tailor and test an HIV prevention intervention for community HCWs, this study describes the observed frequency with which appropriate SP were used by HCWs in low-income community clinics of Santiago. Also, the availability of supplies is described. A total of 52 structured observations with potential contamination with body fluids were done. HCWs used SP inconsistently, especially neglecting hand washing, surface cleaning, and cleaning of shared materials. Lack of materials contributed in some instances of failure to use SPs, especially wiping surfaces and safe disposal of sharp instruments showed by a positive correlation between use of SP and availability of materials. Essential materials were usually available. Although more education should relate to a better understanding of the importance of SP, no difference was found between professionals and paraprofessionals in the use of SP. It is clear that the initial training, continuing education, and ongoing support for practicing SP are not adequate. Training should be offered to HCWs involved in caring for clients at community clinics to stop the spread of HIV or other infectious diseases in health care settings.

Key words: Chile, community clinics, health care workers, standard precautions.

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