HIV Issues and Mapuches in Chile

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Abstract

Chile is a country with an incipient HIV epidemic. Just as in other countries, disadvantaged groups in Chile are contributing to the increased incidence of the disease. The Mapuche indigenous population is one such group that has been affected by the spread of HIV. However, no prevention programs are tailored to the culturally specific needs of this community. In recognition of this discrepancy, an academic-community partnership was formed to develop an HIV educational module for a Mapuche community. The module was developed for use as part of an already established health-related program. The aims of the module were to identify perceptions about HIV among Mapuches and present information specific to HIV and its prevention. Focus was placed on cultural sensitivity. A total of 16 Mapuches participated voluntarily and showed some knowledge regarding HIV, but they lacked an overall understanding as to how it is transmitted and why prevention strategies are effective. Continued collaboration between academia and affected communities as well as incorporating HIV information into established programs are effective strategies for delivering prevention information to disadvantaged populations and for further understanding their perceptions and health care needs.

Key words: Araucanos, AIDS, Chile, HIV, indigenous population, Mapuches