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LOVE YOUR HEART PROJECT IN ALBANIA

Blerina Balla, ADRA Albania

Project “Love Your Heart”

- Aim: is to improve the population lifestyles and to decrease morbidity and mortality from the most fatal group of diseases (cardiovascular) in the Adriatic Region
- Duration: 42 months
- Local Partners of this project:
 - Public Institutions: Ministry of Education and Sport, Ministry of Health , Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth
 - NGOs and companies
- Reconstruction of ADRA Health Centre (CVD prevention centre)- promotion of health lifestyle



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Project Outputs: KAP Survey



Love Your Heart: Community research to improve cardiovascular health in central Albania

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Background



The leading cause of mortality in modern Albania is cardiovascular disease (CVD),^{1,2} partially attributable to the southeastern European country's post-Socialist nutritional transition. Rates of death from CVD in Albania have increased significantly in the past two decades.³ Increases in the prevalence and severity of modifiable risk factors for CVD have contributed to these shifts. These risk factors include high blood pressure, high cholesterol, excess body weight, smoking, lack of physical activity, and diabetes. Initiatives are needed to assess and reduce the prevalence of known risk factors for CVD. In July-August 2013, the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) in Albania assessed CVD risk factor knowledge and status in adult (18 years and older) Albanian and Roma populations around Tirana, the capital city and largest urban center, in order to best create effective educational programs. Continued community education, lifestyle modification, and health services programs that incorporate the diverse cultural and socioeconomic needs of the population are needed in order to reduce CVD prevalence and promote health.

Methods

Clinical screenings (n=95) were conducted to evaluate blood pressure, blood glucose, BMI, smoking, physical activity, dietary awareness, and personal and family history. An Albanian-speaking doctor and nurse were present at each mobile clinic site to screen participants, record data, and provide other clinical services.



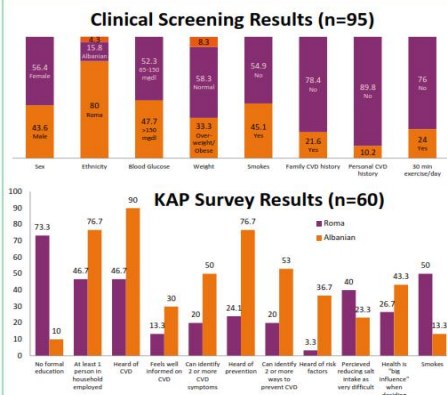
Knowledge, attitudes, and practices surveys (KAP) surveys (n=60) addressing dietary practices, CVD information sources, and attitudes on prevention were developed and translated before being implemented via door-to-door recruitment. Thirty surveys were conducted in Roma communities and 30 in Albanian neighborhoods.



A focus group (n=8) was conducted to gather information about CVD risk perceptions and behaviors, as well as to identify opportunities for creating health promotion and CVD risk reduction programs for Albanian communities. Participants were recruited during mobile clinics and screening sessions several days prior.



Results



Major Findings

1. **Significant disparities exist** between Roma and Albanian communities in health status and health knowledge, consistent with socioeconomic disparities between the groups.
2. **Understanding impacts** of certain behaviors often does not translate into performing healthy behaviors and avoiding unhealthy ones.
3. A **desire for additional health information** and programs was expressed by almost everyone.
4. Members from both communities had a **tendency to think of medications as easier or more effective treatments** for CVD risk factors than changes in diet and exercise.
5. **Barriers such as low income and lack of infrastructure** to support a healthy lifestyle contribute to the risk factors assessed even when individuals are knowledgeable about CVD.

Recommendations

1. Conduct a **barrier analysis** of health behaviors.
2. **Tailor interventions** to the communities. In Roma communities, involve children and use tangible, applicable lessons that are feasible to implement.
3. In both Roma and Albanian communities, **use activities that necessitate physical action and practicing** the desired behaviors.
4. Incorporate **education into existing mobile clinic** activities. Educational games, pamphlets, diagrams, and demonstrations could be used.
5. **Emphasize the efficacy of diet and exercise** in improving health compared to medications.
6. Use an abridged version of the survey as an intervention **pre-test and post-test**.
7. **Assess motivation** to change unhealthy behaviors and to provide motivating factors.

References

1. Dema, F., Becker, B., and Prence, J. (2012). Regional Differences Among Cardiovascular Disease Risk Factors in Post-Communist Albania. *Journal of Educational and Social Research*, 2 (6) pp 195-203
 2. Hajdini G. (2009). National Background Report on Health in Albania. *University of Tirana Institute for Public Health*, 1-20.
 3. Rayner, M., Allender, S., & Scarborough, P. (2009). Cardiovascular disease in Europe. *European Journal of Cardiovascular Prevention & Rehabilitation*, 16(2 suppl), S43-S47.

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180 trainings have been organized for Albanian and Roma people

- 1302 beneficiaries have participated in the trainings organized for Albanian citizens;
- 98 trainings have been organized;
- Target groups: young people, children, women, men and elderly people



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Cooking classes



Aerobic Classes



Elderly people trainings



Trainings the Roma and Egyptian communities

- Not registered in Civil Registration Offices, illiteracy, unemployment, lack of life skills, early marriage, inadequate living conditions
- Targeted different communities such as Fushe Kruja, Nishtulla/Durres, Shkoza, Bregu i Lumit, Liqeni, Ura e Farkes, Sharre/Tirana
- 70 trainings have been implemented – more than 712 beneficiaries have participated

Men, boys trainings about the risk factors of CVD



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School Campaigns:
27 school campaigns
has been organized-
around 4700 pupils
participated in these
activities



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- 22 screening activities in different regions of Albania (Fushe-Kruja, Kruja, Lezhe, Korce, Fier, Durres, Tirana, Elbasan est.) have been organized

- More than 1130 Albanian and Roma people have been screened through this process

- Lack information about the risk factors of CVD





- ❑ 5 Training with non medical staff (around 60 educators)
- ❑ Screening process has been conducted with them



Trainings with nurses and doctors



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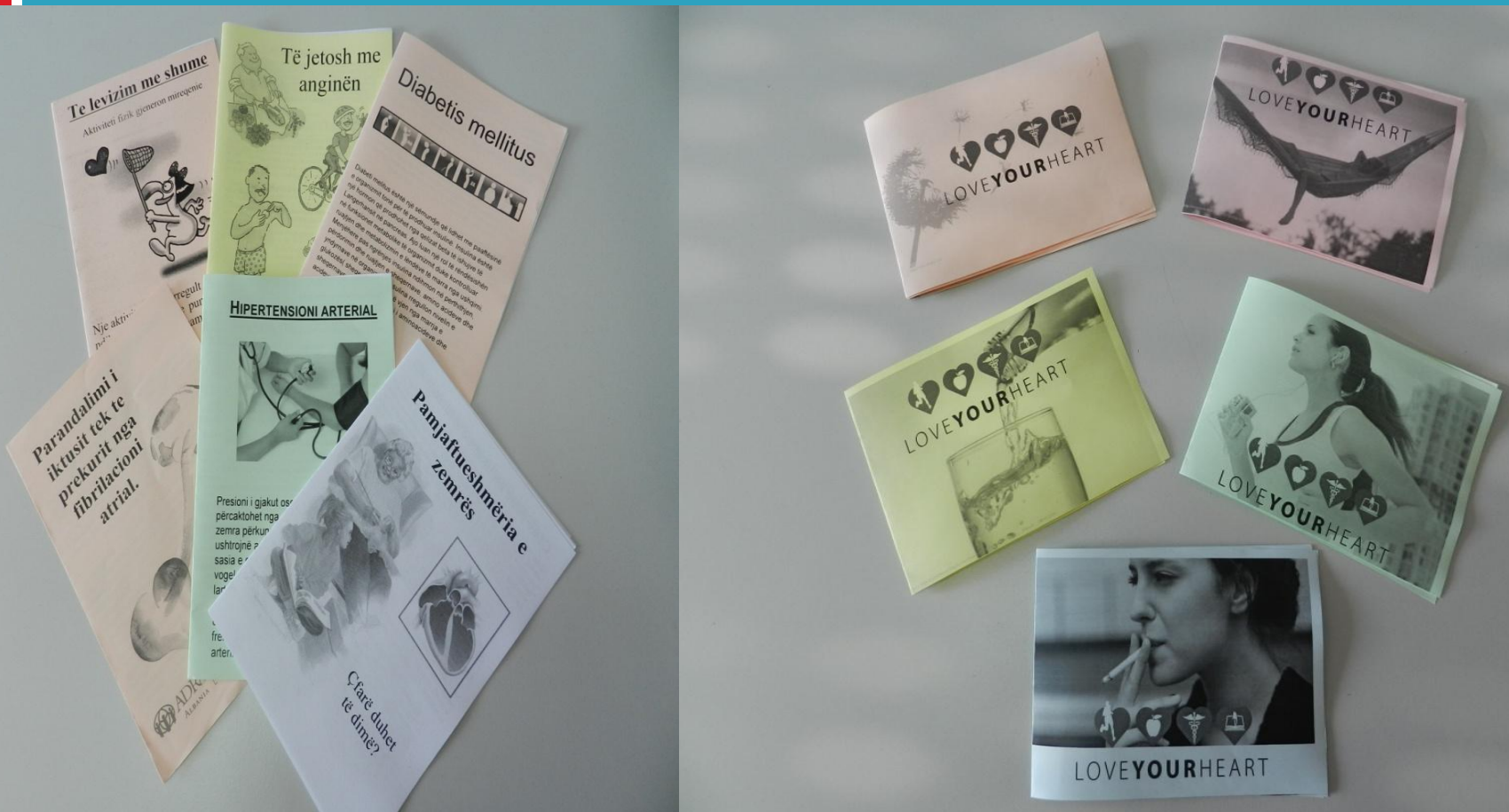
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Dissemination activities: Printed and distributed brochures and flyers



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Dissemination activities :A blog-spot and facebook page established



The screenshot shows a Blogger blog post for 'LOVE YOUR HEART'. At the top, there are four heart-shaped icons: a person running, an apple, a caduceus, and an open book. The title 'LOVE YOUR HEART' is prominently displayed in large, bold letters. Below the title, the post is dated 'Wednesday, April 29, 2015'. The main content is a blog post titled 'School campaign in "Qemal stafa" with coworkers from Italy and Croatia'. The text describes a campaign organized by the ADRA Albania team at an elementary school, focusing on healthy lifestyle factors like nutrition, physical activity, and stress management. To the left of the main text, there is a sidebar with a logo for 'Adriatic IPA' and text mentioning sponsorship by the European Union. To the right, there is a small graphic titled 'HOW SITT-TING YOUR BODY' and a 'Like us on facebook!' link to 'Love Your Heart Albania'. The browser's address bar shows the URL 'http://adriatic-cvd-prevention-network.blogspot.al/'.



The screenshot shows the Facebook page for 'LOVE YOUR HEART Albania'. The page header includes the name 'LOVE YOUR HEART Albania' and navigation tabs for 'Page', 'Messages', 'Notifications', 'Insights', and 'Publishing Tools'. The main cover image features a group of people, with the text 'LOVE YOUR HEART Albania City - Alternative & Holistic Health'. Below the cover, there are statistics: '472 likes +6 this week', '4 were here 0 this week', and 'Post reach of 16 this week'. The main content area shows a post from 'LOVE YOUR HEART Albania' dated '11 December 2015'. The post text reads: 'Uji është thelbësor për shëndetin tuaj, më poshtë do të gjeni gjashtë arsye përse duhet të konsumojmë ujë ose lëngje në sasin e duhur cdo dite. 1. Pirja e ujit ndihmon për të ruajtur ekuilibrin e lëngjeve të trupit. 2. Uji mund të ndihmojë në kontrollin e kalorive. Për vite të tëra, dietologet kanë sygjeruar... See More'. On the right side, there is a 'Promote' section showing 'THIS WEEK' with '16 Post Reach' and '7 Post Engagement'. Below that is a 'Recent' list of years from 2015 to 2012. The bottom of the page shows a Windows taskbar with the time '1:50 PM' and date '1/18/2016'.

Dissemination activities: Implemented 13 radio programs



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Dissemination activities: Organized awareness activities (world days)

- ❑ 1 World Elderly Day,
- ❑ 1 International Day of Diabetes
- ❑ 2 World Health Day
- ❑ 2 World Tobacco Day
- ❑ 2 World Heart Day

In total, 8 World days and 2 local days have been organized



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Thank You!

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