FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE: EDUCATING STUDENTS ON *Schistosoma mansoni* THROUGH DIDACTIC MODELS

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The use of didactic models is highly relevant for teaching and learning, especially in the field of Parasitology, which encompasses a range of complex concepts that are often difficult to understand and not always properly addressed. This study aims to evaluate whether didactic models can facilitate the teaching and learning process of the *Schistosoma mansoni* life cycle for second-year high school students at a public state school in the municipality of Queimados, Rio de Janeiro. To achieve this, a pre-questionnaire was administered to assess students' prior knowledge. Subsequently, the actual effectiveness of the model in the teaching and learning process was analyzed through a post-questionnaire. The model was constructed using the following materials: white biscuit clay, pink and burgundy dyes, styrofoam (50 cm x 50 cm), colored cardstock, hot glue, office paper, toothbrush bristles, figurines, Velcro, and modeling tools. After implementing the didactic model in the classroom, a 92% increase in correct answers was observed, demonstrating its effectiveness in the learning process. Within this percentage, students showed a clear understanding of schistosomiasis, correctly identifying the characteristics of the definitive and intermediate hosts of *S. mansoni*, the main symptoms of the disease, the most effective preventive measures, and the specifics of its treatment. We conclude that the use of didactic models in education facilitates the comprehension of both basic and complex topics, such as those covered in parasitology. This approach makes learning more dynamic and effective, standing out as a valuable pedagogical tool for enhancing students' knowledge acquisition. Additionally, it fosters critical thinking, promotes inclusion, and stimulates scientific curiosity.

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