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SCHOOL VISITS TO THE MICROBIOLOGY AND PARASITOLOGY LABORATORIES AT THE FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OF UBERLÂNDIA AS A STRATEGY FOR PROMOTING HEALTH EDUCATION

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Abstract

Parasitic and infectious diseases are topics related to Health Education, taught in Basic Education within Science and Biology curricula. For effective learning, it is essential to associate theoretical content with practical activities. However, many schools unfortunately lack the infrastructure for practical lessons. Our project aims to bridge this gap and democratize access to Microbiology and Parasitology laboratories through guided visits focused on promoting Health Education. In 2023/2024, seven visits were conducted, involving 160 students and 10 teachers aged between 12 and 60. The guided tours included explanations and presentations of parasites (*Ascaris lumbricoides*, *Enterobius vermicularis*, *Taenia solium*, *Taenia saginata*, *Schistosoma mansoni*, *Trypanosoma cruzi*, *Giardia duodenalis*, *Pediculus humanus*, *Pthirus pubis*, *Rhipicephalus sanguineus*, *Tunga penetrans*, *Aedes aegypti*, *Triatoma infestans*, and various flies), bacteria (*Staphylococcus aureus*, *Escherichia coli*, and *Salmonella* spp.), and fungi (*Aspergillus* spp. and *Candida albicans*) under a microscope. Parasites preserved in formalin, insect collections, and 3D models of bacteria and fungi were also observed. At the end of the visits, a discussion session was held, followed by a questionnaire. The results indicated that 55.9% of the students had previously participated in similar activities, while 44.9% had not; 47.4% reported having practical Science/Biology classes, while 52.5% did not. Moreover, 93.2% acknowledged knowing that parasites are harmful to health, while 6.7% did not. Regarding student perceptions of the activity, 68.6% rated it as "loved it," 29.6% as "liked it," 0.84% as "somewhat liked it," and 0% as "disliked it." In conclusion, the project contributed to democratizing access to knowledge and the university, fostering students' interest in the covered topics and encouraging them to become knowledge multipliers, thereby contributing to a healthier society.

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