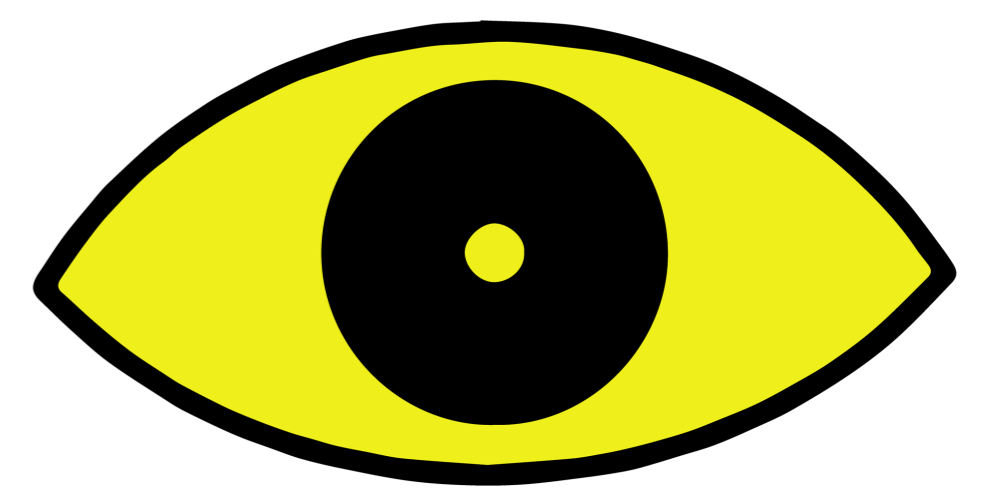


UNAM Students' Multilingual Communication Campaign towards "Kicking out" Hepatitis E in Namibia

AUTHORS: 1. Dr Rachel Freeman, Head: Corporate Social Responsibility & Senior Lecturer in Social Work, 2. Ms. Frauke Stegmann, Lecturer in Visual Arts, Department of Humanities & Arts, School of Humanities, Society & Development, 3. Mr. Nigel Mkwaira, Creative Design Specialist, Corporate Engagement and International Relations



#KickOutHepE

INTRODUCTION:

The outbreak of the Hepatitis E virus (HEV) persistently spread across all 14 regions of Namibia since December 2017. It became a cause for concern and an issue which required urgent research attention from a social scientist and public health multilingual communication perspective (Ministry of Health and Social Services, 2019).

The spread of the HEV disease called for a joint multilingual communication campaign geared towards "kicking out" HEV. In response to this call, UNAM's 3rd Year Student Social Workers & 3rd Year Visual Arts Students under the Scholarship: Dr Rachel Freeman, Senior Lecturer, Social Work and Ms. Frauke Stegmann, Lecturer in Visual Arts initiated the 1st "Kick out" Hepatitis E multilingual communication campaign. The initiative was financially made possible by Professor Judith Hall, Founder of the Phoenix Project of Cardiff University in Wales. This poster exhibits UNAM students' multilingual communication campaign towards risk reduction in "kicking out" Hepatitis E in Namibia.

PROBLEM STATEMENT:

Hepatitis E is an inflammation of the liver caused by infection with the hepatitis E virus (HEV) (WHO,2022).



UNAM's Leadership Commitment to "Kick Out" Hepatitis E in Namibia



1st Soap Donation Educational Drive in Samora Marcel Constituency in Windhoek



RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

1. What is Hepatitis E?
2. How is Hepatitis E spread?
3. What are some of the challenges experience during the outbreak of Hepatitis E?
4. What needs to be done to curb the spread of Hepatitis E?



Joint Multilingual Soap Drive to "Kick Out" Hepatitis E by UNAM 3rd Year Student Social Workers & 3rd Year Visual Arts Students



Omusati Outapi Stakeholders Briefing

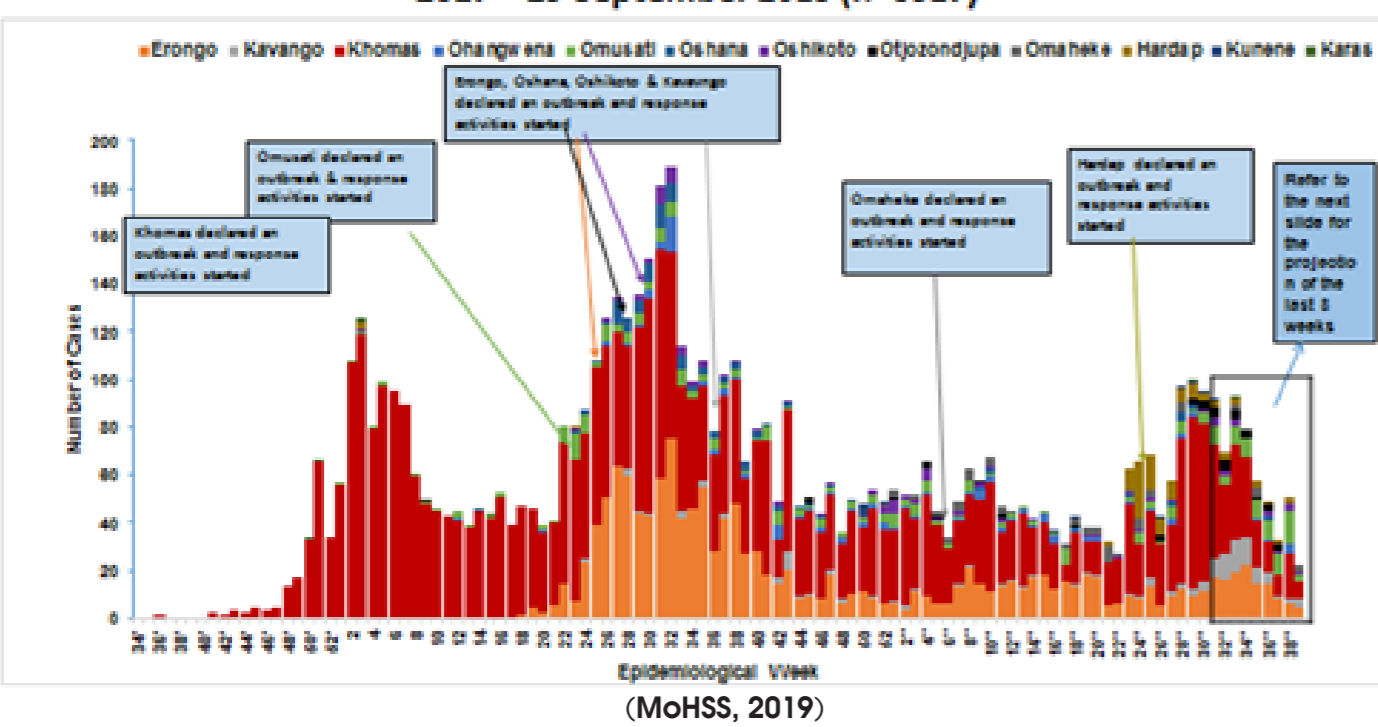
CONCLUSION:

The poster concludes and recommends that community knowledge, attitudes, behaviours and practices play a key role in strengthening any field response towards disaster risk reduction. Early action needs to be taken on the impact of any disaster or infectious diseases (e.g. Hepatitis) among communities. For example, curbing the spread of Hepatitis E, requires local communities to understand the disease and its route of transmission to engage in basic hygiene practices such as, hand washing, appropriate use of toilet facilities, and to seek health services once symptoms appear.

Community engagement through information sharing, communication and education (IEC) in a multilingual manner is a core part of public health education in strengthening disease outbreak response (Kickbusch and Reddy 2016). The multilingual communication campaign contributed to increased awareness and education in the elimination of HEV.

It assisted the government of Namibia, in particularly, the MoHSS, parastatals, and the private sector to collaborate with communities to become resilient during the disease outbreak of HEV. All aspects of the campaign described herein are considered to be part of a public health multilingual campaign geared towards interventions to "kick out" HEV and led to the Ministry of Health and Social Services declaring an end to HEV in Namibia in March 2022

Figure 1: Epi Curve. Of Hepatitis E cases by epidemiological week, Namibia, September 2017 – 29 September 2019 (n=6517)



METHODOLOGY:

The study applied a phenomenological, qualitative, exploratory and descriptive approach, which was contextualize in nature. Applied purposive sampling, Community Mapping and health promotion outreaches. Two-pronged approach: 1) Data collection through face-to-face interviews, focus group discussions, field observations & field notes in Omusati region. 2) Public health education in Khomas region. Data was analysed thematically. Preliminary themes and findings were shared with the response teams at an early stage of analysis in order to inform and shape response strategies and interventions towards disaster risk reduction.

FINDINGS:

- Impactful Student-led public health education on prevention of HEV.
- 1500 bars of soap distributed with branded educational sticker on the signs and symptoms of Hepatitis E.
- Increased knowledge & skills gained on prevention of HEV by community members.
- Community members gained new understandings that Hepatitis E is a disease caused by HEV Genotypes 1 and 2.
- New knowledge gained that HEV is transmitted via the fecal-oral route.
- Gained new understanding on ways of HEV transmission, e.g. not washing hands in clean running water and soap after using the toilet, before eating & after changing a baby's nappy,
- Learn that symptoms of the disease consist of yellowing of the eyes, (i.e. jaundice), abdominal pain, fever, nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea.
- The UNAM Student-led multilingual campaign towards 'Kicking Out' Hepatitis E contributed to the Ministry of Health and Social Services declaring an end of the Hepatitis E epidemic in Namibia (MoHSS, 2022).
- UNAM Students benefitted from Work Integrated Service learning opportunities through community engagement.

- Educational - learned about the signs & symptoms of Hep E.
- Gained info on how to change behavior & practices by washing hands properly with soap & clean running water and not in basin.
- Learned to wash hands after using the toilet, before handling food or eating and after changing a baby's nappies in prevention of Hep E.
- Increased personal hygiene.
- Increased awareness on the importance of maintaining a clean environment.




Let's Elbow Greet to Kick Out Hep E

Institution: University of Namibia Email address of Corresponding Author: rfreeman@unam.na

