

## ANNEX 7. PREVENTION CAMPAIGN AGAINST HANTAVIRUS IN CHILE: NONOUTBREAK AND OUTBREAK SITUATIONS

---

### A PREVENTION CAMPAIGN FOR NONOUTBREAK SITUATIONS

In 1995, the first case of hantavirus pulmonary syndrome (HPS) appeared in Region X of Chile, in a village near El Bolsón, Argentina. Due to the proximity of HPS cases in Argentina, a communication campaign was implemented in southern Chile. Every health service in the southern region produced a campaign addressing its own regional needs, which mostly included the production of posters and pamphlets.

### A PREVENTION CAMPAIGN FOR OUTBREAK SITUATIONS

In 1997, an outbreak of HPS occurred in Aysén, Region XI of Chile, and provoked panic among the population. In response, the Ministry of Health established a communication strategy at the national level.

The objectives of the communication strategy were to obtain prevention techniques culturally appropriate to the rural population, to calm and protect the urban and rural population, and to educate health care workers.

A number of actions were taken. Daily reports on the epidemiologic situation were disseminated through the media. A relationship was established between the National Commission on Hantavirus and the press. Educational materials were distributed in schools, bus terminals, and other public places. A scientific conference was held for journalists, with participation from epidemiologists, virologists, and a rodent specialist. A "hantavirus radio day" was produced, which established communication between specialists and the population. Special programs about hantavirus were televised. Finally, a Hantavirus Prevention National Campaign was designed and implemented.

The Hantavirus Prevention National Campaign was divided into two stages, general prevention and summer prevention.

In the first stage, the general objectives included reducing and preventing hantavirus infection in the country and promoting in-home hygiene habits, especially in

rural zones. Specific objectives included promoting the adoption of prevention measures in the population and informing the population of the mechanisms of transmission and characteristics of the virus in order to calm their fears.

Media and material support were extensive. They included:

- radio: two messages (rural and urban), for four weeks in September and October
- television: two commercials (rural and urban), for four weeks in September and October
- posters: two (rural and semiurban zones), 50,000 copies, distributed in September
- notes: for general information, 500,000 copies, distributed in September
- notebook for public sector health group: 16,000 copies, distributed in October
- notebook for private sector health group: 14,000 copies, distributed in October
- notebook for hospital professionals: 1,000 copies, distributed in October
- notebook for basic education teachers: 80,000 copies, distributed in October
- posters for schools (rural and urban): 10,000 copies, distributed in October

The second stage of the national campaign focused on summer prevention. Its general objectives included promoting a safe summer through the adoption of prevention measures for camping and staying in summer homes and promoting the adoption of prevention measures by persons who work or have contact with rural areas.

Media and material support was comprehensive and included:

- radio: two messages (cabins and camping), for a month, from December to January
- television: two commercials (cabins and camping), for a month, from December to January

- posters: two (cabin and camping sectors), 50,000 copies, distributed December to January
- notes: two (cabin and camping sectors), 500,000 copies, distributed December to January
- Material for those who work with National Forests Corporation: for visitors, notes (500,000) and posters (700); for employees: small notebooks for park rangers (400); for volunteers: small notebooks (1,200)

### **COMMUNICATION STRATEGY FOR MAINTENANCE (NONOUTBREAK PERIOD)**

During this period, the Ministry of Health strategy was to maintain prevention measures, especially in the previously affected areas of the Ninth through the Eleventh regions.

Accomplished and planned future actions include:

- reporting new cases to the population regularly
- maintaining a permanent level of caution in the public, in order to maintain good hygiene habits, especially in the rural regions

- continuing commercials on television aimed specifically at rural residents.

Also to be produced are a video and book to be distributed at the central level. Both pieces will summarize all the work accomplished by the Hantavirus Taskforce. The materials will also serve as a registry of the experience that may be useful for future generations of health care workers. National campaign officials will also work to obtain new sponsors to contribute to the production of other educational materials, especially in regard to personal risk.

For more information about Chile's health education program, contact:

María Elina Barrera  
Jefe de Comunicaciones y Relaciones Públicas  
Ministerio de Salud de Chile  
Mac Iver 541, Oficina 201  
Santiago  
Chile  
Telephone: (56-2) 630-0301; Fax: (56-2) 639-7292