



**HEALTH PROMOTION FOR PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHERS:  
EXPERIENCE OF UNIVERSITY EXTENSION**  
**PROMOÇÃO DE SAÚDE PARA DOCENTES DE ESCOLAS PÚBLICAS:  
EXPERIÊNCIA DA EXTENSÃO UNIVERSITÁRIA**  
**PROMOCIÓN DE LA SALUD PARA DOCENTES DE ESCUELAS PÚBLICAS: EXPERIENCIA DE  
EXTENSIÓN UNIVERSITARIA**

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**RESUMO**

**Objetivo:** descrever as experiências vivenciadas nas atividades de promoção à saúde vocal para professores de escolas públicas realizadas por meio de um projeto de extensão universitária. **Método:** relato de experiência, em formato descritivo, das ações de promoção à saúde do projeto de extensão "Dê a voz a quem precisa", no período de 2017 a 2019, tendo, com público-alvo, os docentes de escolas públicas do Ensino Fundamental. **Resultados:** foram desenvolvidas ações inicialmente por meio de mesas-redondas onde se procurou oferecer conhecimento sobre fisiologia vocal, sintomas de voz e identificação de fatores desencadeantes de injúria vocal. Posteriormente, por meio de oficinas de cuidados com a voz e saúde, abordaram-se, além de aspectos da saúde vocal, os sintomas clínicos mais comuns entre os docentes. Prezou-se pela adoção de práticas educativas horizontais que reconhecessem o professor como sujeito ativo de seu conhecimento. Notou-se que as atividades extensionistas de promoção em saúde vocal puderam ressignificar a saúde do professor como um todo. **Conclusão:** os problemas de saúde vocal são significativos entre os professores e, com as ações planejadas, estes puderam obter ganhos em sua condição vocal e qualidade de vida. A atuação dos extensionistas, por meio de práticas educativas exemplares, pôde potencializar as transformações comportamentais que existiram, dando à extensão um significado preponderante de modificadora da realidade.

**Palavras-chave:** Promoção de Saúde; Professor; Extensão Universitária.

**ABSTRACT**

**Objective:** to describe the experiences of vocal health promotion activities for public school teachers carried out through a university extension project. **Method:** experience report, in descriptive format, of the health promotion actions of the extension project "Give the voice to those in need", in the period from 2017 to 2019, having, with target audience, the teachers of public elementary schools. **Results:** actions were initially developed through round tables where knowledge about vocal physiology, voice symptoms and identification of triggering factors of vocal injury were sought. Later, through voice and health care workshops, the most common clinical symptoms among teachers were addressed, in addition to vocal health aspects. The adoption of horizontal educational practices that recognize the teacher as an active subject of their knowledge was appreciated. It was noted that extensionist vocal health promotion activities were able to ressignify the health of the teacher as a whole. **Conclusion:** vocal health problems are significant among teachers and, with the planned actions; they were able to obtain gains in their vocal condition and quality of life. The work of extensionists, by means of exemplary

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educational practices, has been able to potentialize the behavioral transformations that have taken place, giving extension a preponderant meaning of modifying reality.

## RESUMEN

**Objetivo:** describir las experiencias de las actividades de promoción de la salud vocal para docentes de escuelas públicas realizadas a través de un proyecto de extensión universitaria. **Método:** relato de experiencia, en formato descriptivo, de las acciones de promoción de la salud del proyecto de extensión "Dar la voz a los necesitados", en el período de 2017 a 2019, teniendo, con el público objetivo, docentes de escuelas públicas de Educación Fundamental. **Resultados:** las acciones se desarrollaron inicialmente mediante mesas redondas donde se buscó ofrecer conocimientos sobre fisiología vocal, síntomas de la voz e identificación de factores desencadenantes de lesión vocal. Posteriormente, a través de talleres de atención con la voz y la salud, además de aspectos de salud vocal, se abordaron los síntomas clínicos más comunes entre los docentes. Se agradeció por la adopción de prácticas educativas horizontales que reconocieron al docente como sujeto activo de sus conocimientos. Se señaló que las actividades de extensión para promover la salud vocal podrían resignificar la salud del docente en su conjunto. **Conclusión:** los problemas de salud vocal son significativos entre los docentes y, con las acciones planificadas, lograron obtener ganancias en su condición vocal y calidad de vida. La actuación de los extensionistas, a través de prácticas educativas ejemplares, logró potenciar las transformaciones conductuales que existían, dando a la extensión un sentido predominante de modificación de la realidad.

**Palabras-clave:** Promoción de la salud; Profesor; Extensión Universitaria.

## INTRODUCTION

With its 209.3 million inhabitants, Brazil is a country of immense demographic proportions and this is no different when it comes to the number of teachers, estimated at approximately 2.5 million. In view of this amount, the problem of working conditions and their effects on teachers' health is a relevant aspect, highlighting that the care for these professionals is considered essential. Because it is the main instrument of teachers' work, the voice is a factor of analysis that must be considered, since the development of voice disorders has led to situations of absenteeism and incapacity to perform their duties, implying financial and social costs.<sup>1-4</sup>

It is known that one of the functions of the university extension is to promote learning that goes beyond the classroom, promoting the connection of scientific knowledge with the community population. The extension acts as an interdisciplinary, cultural, educational, scientific process of dialogical interaction, in which a two-way street between society and the university occurs. In the field of health, this occurs mainly through health promotion strategies that, according to the National Health Policy, can be conceptualized as "a set of strategies and ways to produce health aiming at equity and quality of life, with reduction of vulnerability and risks to health resulting from social, economic, political, cultural and environmental determinants".<sup>5-7</sup>

The actions to promote vocal health generate positive results, because they point out alternatives that consider the needs of the educational technique based

on interaction, the demonstration of their weaknesses and the awareness of the teacher as the main responsible for caring for his voice. In general, there is a lack of perception about how problems, signs and vocal symptoms present themselves. In addition, there is a passive acceptance of the voice disorder as a natural consequence of the profession.<sup>8</sup>

Thus, this study aims to describe the experiences lived in vocal health promotion activities for public elementary school teachers through the university extension project "Give Voice to Those in Need".

## **METHOD**

This is an experience report, in descriptive format, about the experiences during the health promotion actions of the extension project "Give the voice to those in need", developed by the Faculty of Medicine (FAMED) of the Federal University of Alagoas (UFAL), Campus A.C Simões, located in the city of Maceió, from 2017 to 2019. The actions have as target audience about 90 teachers from three public elementary schools located near UFAL. These are the teachers: Professor Maria Carmelita Cardoso Gama, Denisson Menezes and Hévia Valéria Maia Amorim.

The project's integral team is interdisciplinary and multi-professional, being formed by university students, from Medicine and Speech Pathology courses, besides teachers and professionals from several areas, among them: Otorhinolaryngology; Speech and Hearing Therapy; Sociology and Medicine. One of the key points for the success of the project is the opportunity that is given to the student members to be active in the conception of the project.

The "Give a Voice to Those in Need" action sequence is established by the initial project planning at the beginning of each school semester. In addition, fortnightly meetings of members are held in order to build up the actions in detail, through planning and elaboration of didactic materials to be used during the activities, such as questionnaires on voice symptoms and other complaints associated with the work of teachers and also explanatory folders.

In addition, seminars are held on dysphonia for project members, in which the singularities of the teacher's illness process are discussed, in order to foster the reflections that enabled the construction of educational actions in a critical-reflexive manner, based on scientific and collective thinking.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Initially, the project activities consisted of the "Vocal Health Roundtables", having an interactive character. In them, it was sought to offer the knowledge with

didactic accessible to teachers through lectures given by members of the project regarding vocal physiology, voice symptoms, voice care and the identification of triggering factors of vocal injuries and others associated with teaching activity.

That round tables are meetings of small groups for debate and training in order to obtain clarifications where there is broad discussion, which can generate controversy. This dynamic of configuration seeks to insert the participants as active and critical subjects in the process of promoting knowledge in health.<sup>9</sup>

During the events, which took place in the schools, the members of the project used the Datashow® projector and the microphone to explain the main aspects of vocal physiology, always evoking the teachers' previous knowledge about the subject. Then, there was the exposure of the main vocal disorders, how this could affect them, the causes, harmful factors and guidelines on voice control, water intake and vocal rest. At that moment, there was a greater participation of the audience with questions and testimonies about the lack of vocal health care of the teacher and the lack of self-care derived from ignorance.

Teachers' perception of the lack of public policies on vocal health is true. When it comes to the Brazilian legislation in favor of vocal health teaching, it is noted that there are few laws and proposals that, in general, only recommend the treatment of those who already present the vocal disorder. Thus, the literature indicates that the few preventive and promotional actions carried out in this field of health come from university extensionist projects.<sup>5</sup>

With the realization of the tables, voice complaints were found, mainly hoarseness, vocal fatigue and loss of voice, besides symptoms of rhinitis and allergic sinusitis, repetitive pharyngitis and gastroesophageal reflux. The appearance of this symptomatology is related, according to the teachers' report, to the environmental risk factors that exist, derived from the precarious structure, such as environmental dust, use of unhygienic ventilators, unfavorable classroom acoustics and excess of students per class. In addition, teachers have exposed psycho-emotional complaints derived mainly from excessive workload. Some of these symptoms include: anxiety, depression and the Burnout Syndrome.

It is known that the circumstances under which teachers mobilize their physical, cognitive and affective abilities in their work can generate over-strength or hyper-solicitation of their psychophysiological functions, generating the precipitation of clinical symptoms.<sup>10</sup>

Several studies have shown that the main pathologies associated with vocal disorders are gastroesophageal reflux and respiratory problems, such as rhinitis and rhinopharyngitis. Taking this into account, health promotion and prevention actions, structured in order to change habits and improve mechanisms on the main aspects of these diseases, prove to be an important tool in the search for the well-being of this professional.<sup>3,11-2</sup>

After the roundtables held in the three public schools, it was possible to observe that, in addition to voice disorders, there are other clinical complaints of great impact on the quality of life of these people, which made the extensionists see the need to create health actions, awareness, which could act more strongly in the daily lives of teachers.

Thus, the "Workshop on teachers' voice care and health" was created, aiming to provide guidance on voice care, promoting information on what improves and what worsens voice complaints and vocal exercises for everyday life, how to prevent and clinically treat symptoms of pharyngitis, rhinitis and allergic and/or infectious sinusitis, in addition to gastroesophageal reflux, and suggestions to combat stress in the teacher's work, which can cause Burnout Syndrome.

The workshop is a work methodology that focuses on collective formation. It foresees moments of interaction and exchange of knowledge from a horizontal perspective in the construction of unfinished knowledge. It concerns a democratic, participative and reflexive dynamic that takes, as the foundation of the pedagogical process, the theoretical-practical relationship, without exalting the figure of the educator as the only holder of knowledge.<sup>13</sup>

In the field of vocal health, unilateral actions still prevail, guided by the traditional teaching process, with a vertical relationship and originating from hegemonic technical/scientific knowledge. Therefore, they suggested that it is necessary to reexamine this approach, seeking for acknowledging teachers as integral subjects, based on their singularity and specificities, as well as on their perceptions of their voice and the relationship they establish in their daily context.<sup>14</sup>

The workshop began with the dynamics of teaching, through lectures given by extensionists, lasting 15 minutes for each topic. The first approached how it is possible to improve the vocal complaints and clinics most mentioned in the teachers; the second, the vocal exercises that must be done before and after classes; the third, how to alleviate stress and anxiety in the teacher's activity,

besides teaching self-evaluation to identify the signs of Burnout Syndrome. During that time, teachers watched closely and some identified with the clinical complaints addressed. Then came the voice exercises training, with the active participation of the audience in the exercises, and enthusiasm was felt about what was being done. In addition, they learned how to relieve stress in the teaching activity and when to perceive the symptoms of Burnout Syndrome.

Then, there was the dynamics of the debate and, at that moment, a circle was formed in the room, involving the whole group, in order to clear up doubts and provide awareness of the issues addressed. The extensionists asked about the themes, giving the participants the opportunity to talk about their clinical complaints. The purpose of the second part was to bring the teachers closer to the members of the project, removing any barriers that might exist to the exchange of information from the workshop, in addition to encouraging active participation during the process. Mixed reactions were evident, with more active teachers and other more inmates. At the end, explanatory folders were handed out and it was warned that the care and exercises exposed during the workshop need continuity and commitment. The teachers of the schools thanked and felt welcomed and benefited from the guidance. They also emphasized the great importance of this project, due to the intense lack of health care of these professionals, because they felt abandoned. There were moments of sensitivity and the students felt an immense pleasure in being able to transmit the classroom learning to the community, which humanizes and strengthens the formation of the future general practitioner and speech therapist. The extensionist teachers realized the magnitude of these health actions in the academic formation and also an immense satisfaction and pride in being able to contribute to improving the lives of these people.

Finally, it was noted that the vocal health promotion activities carried out in these school communities were able to resign not only the voice of this professional, but his well-being as a whole. The main contributions of extension to health promotion are: awareness about the determinations of the health-disease process and the care of oneself and the identification of demands from individuals. Therefore, extension is an important tool in the promotion of vocal health of teachers.<sup>15</sup>

After the workshops, the project members saw the need to transform the themes addressed in these events into concrete and lasting knowledge. Thus, the

book "Caring for the teacher's voice and health" was created with explanatory content, awareness and step-by-step tips for the teaching activity. This book will be used in the next workshops, which will take place in other schools. In this way, it contributes to the improvement of the teaching health and, consequently, the teaching in public school and a lower absenteeism.

## **CONCLUSION**

In view of the above, it can be perceived that horizontal teaching methodologies should be increasingly applied in health promotion actions, thus enabling discussions and reflections that modify hegemonic learning practices, with a more democratic interaction. In short, initiatives such as these should be expanded and instituted in the academic community's routine to offer the opportunity to adopt changes in lifestyle.

In this perspective, the "Give Voice to Those in Need", through a university extension program, noted that vocal health problems are significant among teachers. It is believed that, with the planned actions, the benefited teachers were able to obtain gains in their vocal condition, improve their quality of life and, consequently, decrease in the incidence of work absences.

The project's extensionists, through exemplary educational practices, have been able to potentialize the behavioral transformations that existed, giving the extension a preponderant meaning of modifying reality. The awareness of the teachers of the schools was noticed, who were willing to take care of their vocal health and to rethink their lifestyles.

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