HRH and COVID-19 response in the Caribbean

An Analysis in 12 countries of the Region

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HRH Strategy

Governance and Stewardship

Capacity building

Coordination with education, reorientation to respond to HS needs
HRH and COVID-19 response
OBJECTIVES

To share information related to COVID-19 response and health workforce in the Caribbean countries

To facilitate the monitoring of HRH policy interventions related to COVID-19

To inform on HRH policy development in terms of lessons learned and areas for improvements
Methods

• On-line questionnaire
• Interviews
• Period: May – July 2020
• Main topics:
  ✓ Measures taken related to HRH during COVID-19 response
  ✓ Legal framework: emergency decrees, existing norms.
  ✓ First level of care health care workers and COVID-19
  ✓ Plans for training
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Quick poll

Join at slido.com #59635
Measures taken related to HRH during COVID-19 response
Caribbean: HRH Measures for COVID-19 response taken by countries

### HRH Measures

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<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
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<td>Re-organization of shifts</td>
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Source: PAHO, Questionnaire COVID-19 response and HRH, July 2020
### Caribbean: HRH Measures for COVID-19 response taken by countries

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Source: PAHO, Questionnaire COVID-19 response and HRH, July 2020
• Not all countries required to hire **new personnel** (42%)
• Most countries deployed nursing and medical **students** in the last year.
  • Haiti deployed **residents** in social service (physicians and nurses)
  • Students supported call centers, contact tracing, triage, diagnosis, and referral
• **Volunteers**
  • Health professionals (public and private sector)
  • Lay volunteers
Agreements with other countries

• 11 out of 12 participating countries reported Cuban brigades
  • Jamaica 140
  • St. Lucia 113
  • Barbados 101

• Cuban medical brigades were composed of MDs and nurses, including:
  • General practitioners
  • Intensivists
  • Internists
  • Infectologists
  • Epidemiologists
Legal framework
• No specific **legal instruments** that addressed HRH
• All countries reported the existence of emergency response decrees
  • Essential workers
  • Enabled the authority to hire HCWs or other personnel
• Existing legal framework
• Hospitals initiatives
  • HCW staffing and scaling, testing, protocols for HRH risk assessment and protection.
Surveillance protocol for HCW at risk

- Yes: 83%
- No: 17%

Emergency decree for HRH

- No: 67%
- Yes: 8%
- Don't Know: 25%

Source: PAHO, Questionnaire COVID-19 response and HRH, July 2020
Current legal framework allows for HRH mobilization and scaling to respond to COVID 19 pandemic

Administrative procedures and contractual mechanisms to facilitate HRH hiring, mobilization and/or changes in the worker profile
Health care workers at first level of care and COVID-19
- Countries maintained basic essential health services
- Some countries stopped operation of PHC clinics temporarily
- HCWs were diverted from FLC to other levels
- Essential services were provided by:
  - Physicians
  - Nurses: public health and rural health nurses
  - Community health workers
  - Students
Plans for training
• Most countries did not report having national plans of training on COVID-19

• Most common training topics:
  • Infection prevention and control (IPC), with an emphasis on the use of PPE
  • Testing
  • Early detection of suspected cases
  • Management of patients
  • Mental health and psychosocial support
• Training target population:
  • Nurses
  • Physicians
  • Medical and nursing students
  • Community health workers
MAIN FINDINGS
• COVID-19 exacerbated gaps in:
  • Availability, distribution and quality of HRH,
  • Limited ability for expansion, recruitment and retention

• Some measures on HRH staffing and scaling were similar:
  • Reorganization of shifts
  • Task shifting
  • Deployment of staff within institutions or between regions.

• PC staff were key in the response:
  • Deployment of mobile teams,
  • Contact tracing, surveillance and referral
Essential health services: reduction

HCW diverted from the first level

Reorganization of services:
• Scheduled appointments
• Expanded schedule at PHC clinics

Transformation of health services for COVID-19 response

Multi-monthly medication supply given earlier to NCD patients (3-month),

Government decrees and national campaigns to stay home

Freeze of public transportation

FEAR of the population

Source: PAHO, Analysis of COVID-19 response and HRH, July 2020 (draft)
• The pandemic led to:
  • Recruitment of physicians and nurses
  • Agreements with other countries (Cuba)
  • Deployment of residents in social service,
  • Deployment of medical and nursing students
  • Participation of volunteers

• Some countries did not require hiring additional HCWs.
  • Second wave?

• No legal instruments that specifically addressed HRH staffing, scaling, and well-being of HCWs
Protection of health care workers represents a challenge
- COVID-19 an occupational disease
- Health insurance plan for HCWs

Decentralized regions & health facilities: initiatives
- HCWs staffing and scaling, testing, protocols for HRH risk assessment and protection.

Most participating countries did not mention having national plans for training HCWs in COVID-19 response.

Training responded to immediate needs
### Factors that influenced COVID-19 response in the Caribbean

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Health system and model of care</th>
<th>Level of decentralization</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>Previous experience in sanitary emergencies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Disaster preparedness and management</td>
<td>Political momentum</td>
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Source: PAHO, Analysis of COVID-19 response and HRH, July 2020 (draft)
Conclusions
The Caribbean has accumulated experiences and lessons learned related to HRH and the COVID-19 pandemic.

It is necessary to **identify and systematize** the experiences to share them among the countries of the region.

Development of **common standards and guidelines** for HRH planning and policy development.

The establishment of an **HRH Action Task Force** could support efforts to advise and monitor the development of public policy.
Thank you!

https://www.paho.org/en/caribbean-subregional-program-coordination