

COMMUNITY THERAPY OPERATION ON THE LANDSLIDE AREA IN BAIXADA SANTISTA

OPERAÇÃO TERAPIA COMUNITÁRIA NO DESLIZAMENTO DE TERRA NA BAIXADA SANTISTA

OPERACIÓN TERAPIA COMUNITARIA EN EL DESLIZAMIENTO DEL SUELO EN LA BAIXADA SANTISTA

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ABSTRACT: In the early morning of 3 March 2020, there was a landslide in Baixada Santista after heavy rainfall, causing the death of 45 people and many others. The Brazilian Association of Community Therapy (ABRATECOM) mobilized with the members of the centers near the accident, the “*Afinando Vidas Institute*” (IAV) and the “CAIFCOM/Santos”, who were responsible for collecting donations and making community therapy circles to welcome the homeless of this tragedy. This work was developed over two weekends by 15 community therapists from the cities of São Paulo and Santos, who held community therapy circles for survivors in the hostels and communities.

KEYWORDS: Community therapy. Landsliding. Baixada Santista.

RESUMO: *Na madrugada de 3 de março de 2020, houve um deslizamento de terra na Baixada Santista após grande volume de chuva, deixando 45 pessoas mortas e muitas outras desabrigadas. A Associação Brasileira de Terapia Comunitária (ABRATECOM) fez uma mobilização com os associados dos polos próximos ao acidente, sendo o “Instituto Afinando a Vida (IAV)” e o “CAIFCOM/Santos”, os quais se responsabilizaram em recolher doações e fazer rodas de terapia comunitária para acolher os desabrigados dessa tragédia. Esse trabalho foi desenvolvido em dois finais de semana, por 15 terapeutas comunitários das cidades de São Paulo e Santos, que realizaram rodas de terapia comunitária para os sobreviventes nos albergues e comunidades.*

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Terapia comunitária. Deslizamento de terra. Baixada Santista.*

RESUMEN: *En la madrugada de 3 de marzo de 2020, hubo un deslizamiento del suelo en la Baixada Santista después de una fuerte lluvia, dejando 45 personas muertas y muchas otras desabrigadas. La Asociación Brasileña de Terapia Comunitaria (ABRATECOM) realizó una*

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movilización con los asociados de los polos cercanos al accidente, siendo el Instituto Afinado la Vida y CAIFCOM/Santos, los cuales fueron responsables en recoger donaciones y hacer el círculo de terapia comunitaria para acoger a las personas sin abrigo involucradas de esa tragedia. Ese trabajo fue desarrollado durante dos fines de semana, por 15 terapeutas comunitarios de las ciudades de San Pablo y Santos, que realizaron los círculos de terapia comunitaria para las personas sobrevivientes que se encuentran en los albergues y en las comunidades.

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Terapia comunitaria. Deslizamiento del suelo. Baixada Santista.*

Introduction

In the early hours of 3 of March of 2020, an unprecedented tragedy shook Baixada Santista. Forty-five people died after landslides caused by heavy rains, this number more than double the deaths caused by the rupture of the Mariana dam in 2015. The cities most affected were Guarujá, Santos and São Vicente, where hundreds of people were left homeless.

The chaotic scenario and the suffering of the people touched us and two days later, we created a network of volunteers, with three institutions, to support the homeless through the Integrative Community Therapy (ICT). Abratecom (Brazilian Community Therapy Association) covered the cost of the trip and provided moral support. The Instituto Caifcom de Santos made contact with the local homeless and offered the circles of integrative community therapy, while the *Afinando a Vida* Institute (IAV) mobilized the community therapists who went from São Paulo to the Baixada to carry out the wheels.

We organized ourselves on two Saturdays (07 and 14 March) to develop the ICT circles, in the first meeting, we were in five people and in the second, in twelve. We took advantage of these opportunities to make many donations of clothes, diapers, baby bottles and even cash contributions.

We carried out six rounds of integrative community therapy in three different places, after the meetings we had the impression that families were already quieting their minds, perceiving the support network, creating new strategies to deal with problems, weighing losses and gains and feeding the hope that better days will come. One of the homeless people, for example, expressed how relieved and safe he was to be in that space and to have managed to save his mother, who had been among the rubble.

Each circle had its own motto, which was chosen by the participants, as “when our head is full of problems, what should we do to be more serene?; who has already lost something, what did you do to find or replace it?; who ever felt paralyzed by a situation, what did they do

to get out of this place?; and, has anyone ever been bothered by depending on someone or something?”. Thus, the questions guided the conversation and helped in the search for solutions, such as having the support of friends, exercising faith, trying to study and do one thing at a time, these being some of the alternatives found in the responses of each group.

In one of the groups, a participant was very concerned about being unemployed, he reported that it is common, in Baixada Santista, for workers to be employed for temporary jobs and then "left to the wind", without receiving their wages. The situation moved other people. The protagonist of the circle said that he was angry at being cheated, that had happened before, so the motto presented to the group was: “who has ever felt betrayed and what did they do to overcome or deal with it?”.

At times, participants were slow to connect with their intimate issues. The emotional instability of people was noticeable, so it was necessary to make a brief relaxation with breathing. At another time, it was realized that it was essential to use music, as one of the meetings began with the presentation of a choir that shared popular songs for children and adults, providing relaxation and lightness. Music is a powerful instrument, it contributes to the expression and elaboration of emotions and is widely used in the technique of Integrative Community Therapy (ICT), so music has met our goals, giving space for the time of celebrations.

Celebrating the future was also a resource used during the circles, especially those made up of children, who said they wanted a new house, own a mansion, be a firefighter, lawyer, pastor, get married and have children, have a soccer field, have a television that shows cartoons, these were some dreams that the kids from Baixada reported in therapy. At the beginning, we found the children a little agitated, festive, some aggressive (due to a structural issue) and very curious, we tried to do the stages of the circle with care to wait as long as necessary for everyone to understand the issues.

The conversations impacted not only the homeless, but the community therapists themselves. Community therapist Janifer, for example, said that she was afraid of what she would find in Baixada, “I noticed all week what I could find in that place, I was apprehensive, afraid of facing so much suffering and I only imagined what those people were going through”. She also said that the experience was completely different from what she imagined, “I was surprised with so much struggle, spirit of unity and to start over that those people showed”, in addition to the children giving a "show of understanding" about what they were going through, “they started agitated, but one step at the time they got into the atmosphere of the circle, asking

for games and telling about the dream of having a new house, in a better place, without trauma and despair” (our translation).

Like Janifer, community therapist and charity sister Lucia Marques, also had moments of uncertainty about what she would encounter during the conversation.

I wondered what to do? and the answer was given to me as that which Jesus gave to a certain man: love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and love your neighbor like yourself; there is no other bigger or more important (our translation).

The technologist and community therapist Jurema Otaviano, classified the activity as a “necessary experience” and said she learned that “opposite concepts, such as strength and vulnerability are closely linked; how much the willingness to donate takes us to other dimensions of citizenship, otherness and collective intelligence” (our translation).

The psychologist and community therapist Neusa, said that the opportunity to work in Baixada Santista was a “call” and adds: “this is my internal availability; contributing to the other is part of my essence, so much so that my first profession was Social Work and in this practice I accompanied several emergency situations”. She also comments that “in situations of suffering people tend to be more supportive, but notes that conflicts are also established, mainly due to the need to live together, so it is essential to establish agreements that accommodate the demands of all those involved” (our translation).

The engineer and community therapist Reginaldo, stated that the support network “makes those affected have a better perspective on their future” (our translation), also highlights that it was important public facilities and an association of friends to provide shelter and food, in addition to people and companies donating essential supplies.

The psychologist and community therapist André Luiz, comments that “welcoming is the key word”, evaluated that the spaces were used in a mature and conscious way, so he was grateful for having participated as a therapist. He also emphasizes “having realized what food and material help they receive. But what about the emotional? The hug? The shoulder? We took it because we were 100% focused!” (our translation).

Psychologist Fernanda Vieira also served as a community therapist. She highlighted some reports of the victims of the landslides:

there were moments of despair, of screaming, of uncertainty if they would continue to live, the children wept; residents saw neighboring houses being washed away by the mud. When the collapse occurred, the noise was so great and thunderous, it seemed that the whole hill was going down, the houses that

were left, trembled when the avalanche passed carrying everything that was on the way: dreams, material goods and documents (our translation).

Fernanda commented that despite the stories of pain and suffering, she carries with her a feeling of “lightness and a grateful heart” for having collaborated in the care of the victims of the Baixada Santista disaster, she remembered that during all the community therapy circles there was always a tribute to those who were on their birthday, “a simple yet profound gesture that opens our eyes to the importance of celebrating life” (our translation).

In this sense, the Integrative Community Therapy (ICT) is a 100% Brazilian practice, created 28 years ago by the psychiatrist Dr. Adalberto Barreto, in an attempt to dialogue between scientific knowledge and popular wisdom, where its innovation occurs through search for solutions to conflicts and human suffering. This technique can be used in communities, neighborhoods, schools, work teams, companies in different contexts and scenarios, such as catastrophes.

Community therapists who participated in this care action for survivors of natural disaster in Baixada Santista: André Luiz (CT-Psychologist), Doralice Otaviano (CT-Psychologist), Jurema Otaviano (CT-Technologist), Pilar (CT-Social Worker) , Angela (CT), Neusa (CT-Psychologist), Reginaldo (CT-Engineer), Renato (CT-Medic), Janifer (CT), Cecília (CT), Lucia Marques (CT-Sister of Charity), Fernanda (CT-Psychologist) and Gleisi (Supporter).

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