

TOPIC: Chagas

APPROACH: N/A

Addressing vector-borne diseases from communication, advocacy, and rights perspective approaches: the example of Chagas

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Chagas is a complex socio-environmental health problem characterised by the dynamic interrelation of different aspects with dimensions of diverse nature (biomedical, epidemiological, sociocultural, political-economic, and others). In other words, Chagas is much more than a disease and, in order to address it, it is essential to understand not only key aspects of the parasite, its routes of transmission, and medical aspects, but also the views of the different actors involved, public policies, the rights of the affected people... Admitting this helps us understand that any answer that seeks to generate contextualised and sustained solutions over time, must include and bring these different dimensions into play. Furthermore, it situates Chagas as a paradigmatic example when thinking about other health problems in general, and other vector borne diseases in particular. In this talk, rather than theoretical elements and conclusions, I will share questions and actions that I hope will later contribute to reach a collective conclusion on the roles that communication, academic work, participation, and social mobilisation have, in materialising concrete steps with political impact from a rights perspective. The “behind the scenes” of World Chagas Disease Day, the recent regulation of the Argentine National Chagas Law, some transdisciplinary actions in public communication, and collaborative work for progressing in crucial aspects regarding the visibility and respect of the rights of people affected by this problem, are all eloquent examples showing the multidimensionality that should guide our steps in the future. A few decades ago, Carlos Morel (a Brazilian researcher dedicated to Chagas) said that we have no choice but to be imaginative, flexible, and unprejudiced, when thinking about new research agendas on the subject. We believe that his words are more contemporary than ever, challenging us not only in reference to new research agendas but - fundamentally - in recognising our political role as beads of a kaleidoscope where diverse types of knowledge, scenarios and social actors come into play.