

Overview

[The Global Health Education and Learning Incubator at Harvard University](#) (GHELI) supports interdisciplinary education about world health through the production, curation, and dissemination of educational public goods. This exemplar work was a final project for “World Health: Challenges and Opportunities,” a General Education course at Harvard College taught by GHELI Faculty Director Sue J. Goldie. For this creative assessment designed with support from GHELI, students systematically analyze a societal health challenge they care about and create a “real world” product intended to influence policy or motivate change.

Abstract

A digital art piece meant to call attention to HIV prevalence among men who have sex with men in Mexico, encourage HIV testing, and highlight HIV resources.

Artist

Jose Quiroz-Yanez (2024)

Caption

This project focuses on the problem of HIV prevalence among men who have sex with men (MSM) in Mexico. Although HIV prevalence in Mexico is relatively low for a developing country at 0.3%, the prevalence among MSM is 17%, disproportionately higher than that of the general population. As noted by a study on HIV risk for MSM in low- and middle-income countries, “MSM in many developing countries are often difficult to access and to study because of criminalization of their behavior, the social stigma associated with their behaviors and identities, participant safety concerns in some settings, and low levels of self-identification among MSM.” This artwork aims to raise awareness for a population that is marginalized and oftentimes unaware of the importance of prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of HIV.

Artist Lens

HIV prevention is funded and studied most at the global level, but when it comes to specific subsets of populations living in specific regions or countries, especially developing ones, resources are not widely available. Initially, I thought this meant I should choose to focus on another population or health problem that might have more data available, but given that the goal of the project is to “motivate a change in thinking or behavior, or to serve as a call to action,” I thought this provided an even bigger reason to focus on HIV prevalence among men who have sex with men (MSM) in Mexico—precisely because there is not a lot of data or resources that can tell us more about the needs of this population.

My digital art piece is meant to serve as a call to action for MSM who are unaware of their HIV status and/or are unsure of where they can find resources for testing/diagnosis, treatment, and prevention measures. I chose this medium because creative visuals are not always used in the field of global health. If this piece were to be displayed publicly or online, it would be an effective attention-grabbing and thought-provoking medium. The red ribbon woven throughout the art piece is “the universal symbol of awareness and support for people living

with HIV.” In the top left, I turned the Red Ribbon symbol into a chain that is breaking to visualize the message that is written (in Spanish) throughout the first part of the ribbon: although MSM may feel alone, they are not; 60% of MSM are unaware of their status and are at higher risk of being infected. In other words, the chain is not connected because not 100% of MSM are aware of their status, but this can change. A man wearing a purple shirt is pictured in the bottom left sitting on the ribbon uncertain about what to do with that information, but there are other men behind him showing their support and acting as a sign of hope as men who have already gone through the process of being tested. The ribbon continues into the right half of the art piece along with the writing, which states “join the 40% [of men] that know their status!” On this half of the art piece, there are men’s hands holding up the ribbon as a symbol of unity, and the hand in purple is meant to represent the man on the left half of the art piece who has now joined the men who know their status. Finally, in the top right I wrote the following message “visit pruebadevih.org.mx to book a rapid HIV test, learn more about HIV, and learn about other free services.” I chose the Aids Health Foundation (AHF) in Mexico website since it is one of the largest HIV awareness and testing programs in Latin America and has focused on expanding rapid testing in the region.

Media

Digital Illustration

