

Title: THE DOLPHIN PROJECT – Since 1963, the largest drowning prevention Program in Brazil – 150,000 children trained.

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Research Topic: “Expanding youth involvement in lifesaving”

Three learning objectives

1. How to encourage the participation of young people in water safety and lifesaving?
2. How to manage 13,487 children in a 20 days lifesaving program?
3. How they can contribute to reduce drowning?

Type of Communication proposed: Oral

Abstract

Brazilian professional lifeguard service starts in Rio de Janeiro City in 1918. Until early 60’s there were no drowning prevention programs to children education. In 1963 starts the first program called “DOLPHIN PROJECT”. This project starts on Copacabana Beach, with 100 children with the objective to entertain and educate them on “beach safety”. Since then the Dolphin Project is done every year with increasing number of children by the Maritime Groupment – Fire Department of Rio de Janeiro and sponsor by Petrobrás.

Project: The project is 20 days long on January (summer), from 8 to 11:00AM with a snack break at 9:45h, Monday to Friday. It encompasses children from 7 to 17 years old in 3 different categories: Dolphin 7 to 10; Moby Dick 11 to 14; and Shark 15 to 17 years old. This project is done in 35 different beaches, which one has their own local coordinator and instructors. Each age category is subdivided in males and females allowing the project to have at general 6 different groups of 60 children, for each beach. The activities and information are adapted for these 3 different levels and include: Beach general activities, beach knowledge, wave and winds formation, drowning prevention actions on the beach and pool, how to stay away from drowning, how to help someone on danger without being the victim, how to rescue, first aid, preservation of environment, lifesaving sports, and general recreation. Parents have their own activity based on education on drowning prevention called Mermaids and Turtles. The project has no charge to participants and is sponsor by a big petroleum company since 5 years.

Results: Since 1964, more than 150,000 children have joined the Dolphin Project. Since 2001, with the sponsor interest of Petrobrás, a big petroleum company, the number of children enrolled has increase each year. In 2006, number of participants is showed on table 1.

Discussion: The project involves many different important aspects. The first and more important one is the ability to spread away the general information on prevention on drowning. This raises the possibility to reduce number of water accidents on Rio de Janeiro State and not even along the beach but also away from the shore, including pools, lakes and ponds. This has a tremendous impact if we considered the number of children enrolled each year since 1963. The potentiality is immense as we can find in every place around the state someone who had himself enrolled on this project some day in their life. Their knowledge is beyond the prevention of drowning and includes the ability to help the lifesaving service in many different aspects using nowadays their professional skills (teachers, layers, physician, governor, mayor and so on...). Other benefits from this project is the social aspect, as it’s free of charge and allow to enroll any one interested along the state coast, and not only on Rio de Janeiro City, making from this project a big class interchangeable knowledge. Learn first aid allow them to help anyone out side the water scenario and sports education can point their ability to water sports. The way the project is divided by age class, make each early category to look and admire the older one with respect and proud allowing a continuation of education. The possibility of TV, Radio and news paper divulgation is huge and increase year by year leading to two interesting facts: the 13,000 vacancies for the program finish before 12:00AM at the first day and sponsor are fighting for an opportunity to give their support. Rio de Janeiro City have shown to have the best improve in the reduction of drowning, along 1995 to 2003 among other states of Brazilian Federation, demonstrating that this would be one prevention program that

makes the different along with others actions. Next action recommended would be to extend the project along every place in Rio de Janeiro State, and not just on the coast.

Participants	number
Children	13,487
Mothers	3,512
Fathers	286
Organizers	12
Coordinators	35
Instructors	940
Collaborators	354
Total of participants	18,626

Table 1 – Dolphin Project Participants and their number split in 35 different beaches - 2006.