

Ingersoll, Jenna, "Knowledge, Practices, and Cultural Influences of Students 18-24 Years Old in Puerto Limón on HIV/AIDS." Advisor: Carmen Marín. St. Olaf. 2007. 24pp.

The World Health Organization estimates that 39.5 million people are living with HIV today. 7,400 of those are in Costa Rica, and this number is on the rise. The purpose of this study was to explore what young adults know about HIV/AIDS and whether this knowledge is represented in their sexual practices, along with attempting cultural explanations for their behaviors in Puerto Limón, Costa Rica's major port on the Caribbean Sea. In this exploratory study, the principal method of gathering information was surveying nearly half of the students at the branch of the University of Costa Rica (UCR) in Limón with supplementary interviews in schools, churches, and clinics in the community. Statistical tests indicate that formal lectures on sexual education are not influencing the knowledge and behaviors of young adults in Limón. Various interview subjects commented on the need to improve or reform sexual education in Costa Rica as it is remaining theoretical, not personal. Further questions should examine how sexual education is being presented, in both format and context, and how the information is received by the students. Cultural characteristics that may also be impacting sexual behaviors include religion, sexual behaviors related to tourism, migratory groups using public services, and poverty inhibiting education.