

**KNOWLEDGE AND BELIEFS ABOUT THE RED CROSS: PERSPECTIVES OF  
COMMUNITY MEMBERS AND RED CROSS WORKERS IN SAN RAMÓN,  
ALAJUELA, COSTA RICA**

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In Costa Rica, the Red Cross provides most of the pre-hospital emergency care and transport. Very few studies have investigated extra-hospital emergency care in Costa Rica so this study aimed to fill this gap through interviews with community members, surveys of Red Cross workers and volunteers, and observations of the daily functioning of the Red Cross Committee in San Ramón, Alajuela, Costa Rica. Over the course of 7 weeks of observation at the Red Cross office of San Ramón, 136 interviews and surveys were collected. The study found a well-equipped committee that provides many services for the community: vehicle, water, and vertical rescue; wheelchair loans; location for utilities payments; first aid courses; blood-pressure checks for walk-in patients; and transportation to appointment for non-emergent patients. The community members and Red Cross workers strongly differed in whether or not the community uses the services appropriately ( $p < 0.0001$ ); community members felt that they did, while Red Cross workers felt that the usage was often irrational and for non-emergent cases that would be better suited to a clinic. Education is needed about the types of cases that require the Red Cross's services so that the usage of the services is more rational in order to save money and resources for true emergencies.