

The course “Talking about Chagas Disease with ArtScience” and the creation of the *Rio Chagas Association*: a deployment of the Selenium project.

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Chagas disease (CD) caused by *Trypanosoma cruzi*, affects about seven million people in the world. It is a silent disease because most of people in the chronic phase do not present clinical symptoms (70%). CD is neglected and problems with the production of Benznidazole, the drug mainly used in the world, have prevented many people from getting access to the etiological treatment. We have a clinical study about nutritional supplementation with selenium and Chagas cardiomyopathy, which affects 30% of infected people. The patients in this project were invited to attend the first edition of our extension course called “Talking about Chagas Disease with ArtScience” that occurs monthly and completed one year recently. The course was created not only for the patients but also for people affected by CD, including family and friends. Our course is based on the ArtScience program that stimulates the creative analysis, critical thinking for resolving real-life problems and collaborative skills for solving challenges. By means of symbolic objects using processes of self-expression such as 5D sculptures, it was possible to discuss aspects of feelings and necessities of people living with CD. The discussions reached a high maturity grade and the group formed an association, the *Rio Chagas Association*, with the aim of expanding the voice of affected people with CD, after an assembly composed by 70 people. The president of the association that is a patient, has participated of discussion tables in important forums including that of Findechagas, FioChagas, DNDi and was invited to participate in the MEDTROP 2016. She has debated aspects discussed by affected people in the course including diagnosis and treatment difficulties and the benefit of a humanized treatment. The creation of the association was an expressive result of the course, showing that the ArtScience program is a robust skill to work the empowerment of people suffering with neglected diseases.

Key words: Chagas disease, ArtScience, Rio Chagas Association

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