

2012 Recipient of the AAOHN Foundation – Medique New Investigator Research Grant:
Hunter Keys

Research Project:

Assessing the burden of diarrheal disease and water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) behaviors in migrant Haitian-Dominican communities in the Dominican Republic: Inroads for prevention and promotion.

Abstract:

Many Haitian migrants work as undocumented laborers in the Dominican Republic. They are known to face disparities in their access to education, healthcare, and legal protection. Their status as a marginalized and at times stigmatized population may be exacerbated by the emergence of cholera on the island, a disease known to disproportionately affect those living in poverty and without access to safe water and improved sanitation.

To gain a more complete picture of how cholera has impacted predominantly poor, migrant communities in the Dominican Republic, our study had four objectives: 1) to measure knowledge, attitudes, and practices (KAP) of cholera prevention behaviors through a provincial-wide epidemiologic survey; 2) to characterize attitudes and perceptions held by patients and healthcare workers in clinics where cholera is treated; 3) to describe the ways in which migrant Haitians and Dominicans perceive cholera risks in their communities; and 4) to characterize the relationship between documentation practices for migrant Haitians and their access to healthcare.

Thus far, we have executed a cross-sectional epidemiologic survey (n=360) in 18 communities identified as having previous cases of cholera and/or being home to a considerable population of migrants. Surveys were conducted by locally hired Dominican and Haitian research assistants who administered the survey in the native language of the participant. Multiple logistic regression will be used to ascertain the relationship between predictors and cholera knowledge and practices.

We have also interviewed key informants, including Dominican layers, civil servants, and Haitian community members. We are planning several focus groups in Haitian communities for further qualitative data collection, and will begin clinical observations as well. These data are collected through audio recordings, transcribed, and then translated. Texts will be analyzed for content using a codebook of emic and etic concepts relating to perceptions of cholera risks, barriers to healthcare, and social interactions between Dominicans and Haitians.

Results will be disseminated through peer-reviewed journals, including the AAOHN journal, and shared with in-country partners in the Ministry of Public Health. We expect our results to facilitate effective public health strategies to reduce the burden of cholera in the Dominican Republic.