

Poster

Title: Deafblindness connecting people on Facebook

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Main focus: Mainly practice/Both congenital and acquired deafblindness

Abstract: Effective communication and professional development concerning deafblindness are still inconsistent in Brazil, and since people from different parts of the country are not closely connected, they have few opportunities to share experiences and practices. I am part of a group called Grupo Brasil (Brazil Group), which develops many initiatives in the field of deafblindness in our country.

In order to raise public awareness about deafblindness, in 2016 the Group launched a campaign called “White and Red November”, and we agreed that a good way to boost the campaign was using social networks. We then signed up for Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube to cater for different kinds of social network users; however, Facebook is the network we have been working on the most, for it reached a greater number of people.

The campaign took place throughout the month of November, and different groups from different parts of Brazil organized a series of activities. We used the social networks to advertise for these activities, which included in situ and online lectures, seminars and cultural activities, and to show what happened during the campaign. Because our Facebook fan page (fb.com/surdocegueirabrasil) got almost 200 likes in less than 24 hours and now, after three months of its launch, we got more than 500 likes, we decided to continue using it, along with the other social networks. In order to do so, we conducted a brief survey to have a more detailed profile of our fans and a better idea of what sort of information they expect to get from the page.

Our public comprises people with both congenital and acquired deafblindness and their family members, different types of professionals who work with them, and people interested in the field. Followers are most interested in communication processes, language acquisition, professional development (many asked about specific courses for guides), and pedagogical and medical issues. There are also those who are interested in the research field, looking for study groups and research groups within our country.

Considering these results, our aim now is to bring people together around deafblindness, making available to the public more accurate information about the condition itself, the life of people with deafblindness, professional development resources and academic research in the field.