

Fining bathers who disrespect the signs can make Brazilian beaches safer?

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In Brazil, from 1996 to 2006, there were 69,901 deaths by drowning, 39% were in natural waters (beaches, rivers, lakes and dams). For every drowning death there were a greater number of aquatic incidents with less severity(1). One of the major steps to reduce these numbers is the use of flags signaling the risk to accidents on beaches and in-land waters: green flag – light hazard; yellow – Medium hazard; and red – High hazard. But does this approach have a good impact on the bathers or is more severe assistance needed or even a police officer to curb the high rate of drowning in Brazil? In Spain, at 'Término Municipal de Cangas' the 'Ordenanza de uso e disfrute das praias' was created – a set of rules that regulate the use of beaches, which includes the application of fines to bathers that do not respect the signalizations, with values ranging from 60 to 300 Euros for minor infractions to 3,000 Euros for very serious infractions (2).

Objective

The aim of this study is to investigate the Brazilian society's opinion about the use of a fine to bathers that disrespect the flags signaling system and undergo to the risk of drowning, especially in the red flag.

Methods

Descriptive and interpretative research realized in Brazil, by information collected in two distinct groups that act in drawing: Group 1 – lifeguards interested in life saving and group 2 – beaches' bathers. The group 1 was interviewed via internet between 6–13 April, 2009 and group 2 between 8–11 August, 2010. Both questionnaires asked whether the application of a fine to the swimmer who does not respect the flags' signs could help to decrease the number of drowning on Brazilian beaches. The collected data was treated by software Microsoft Excel.

Results

In group 1 was interviewed 133 people qualified as: 23.08% of International Lifesaving Community to Prevent Drowning (CIPASS), 6.29% of Brazilian Community of Bodysurfing (CBSP) (4), 17.48% of free professionals, 23.08% by lifeguard and 30.07% of pool lifeguards. From these, 83.92% were male and age superior to 21 years old. In the answers, 75.52% marked that fine bathers who disrespect the flags' sign system could contribute to reduce the number of drowning. In group 2, ninety people by a community beach (called 'Piscinão de Ramos') were interviewed, with age superior to 21 years old. 52% were male. 90% agreed that the application of a fine to someone who does not respect the flags' signs could help to decrease the number of drowning.

Conclusion

It is possible that the bathers pressured by a fine's payment, can increase the safety and importance, represented by flags, making the aquatic leisure areas more safe, which can positively enhance tourism and the image of Brazil internationally. This survey's research provides us an evaluation of the opinion by professionals who work in lifesaving as well as those who daily are exposed to the risk of drowning – the bathers, and both pointed directly in favor to reinforce the strongest actions by the State to the preservation of life in this environment. A national survey including a greater number of people, from different social levels and behavior profiling, in different aquatic areas of ocean beaches or not, to test this hypothesis more broadly in Brazil is needed to verify if this action could really contribute in reducing significantly the number of drowning in Brazil.

Keywords

drowning, education, prevention, environment, flag signalization

Enlace Web

1. www.datasus.gov.br. Página oficial do Ministério da Saúde-DATASUS, a qual contém a base de dados sobre mortalidade no Brasil.
2. http://www.cangas.org/pdf/ordenanza_praias.pdf. Página oficial do Consello de Cangas, a qual contém as disposições gerais do regulamento para o uso e disfrute das praias do Termino Municipal de Cangas - Espanha.
3. <http://br.groups.yahoo.com/group/salvamentoaquatico/>. Página da Comunidade Internacional para Prevenção do Afogamento, Salvamento e Socorrismo - CIPASS.
4. <http://br.groups.yahoo.com/group/surfedepeito/>. Página da Comunidade Brasileira dos Surfistas de Peito – CBSP.

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