CONTINUING EDUCATION COURSE FOR HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS: AN APPROACH TO UPDATING ON NEW TECHNOLOGY AND ADVANCES IN SCIENCE

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There is great need for updating high school teachers regarding the new technology and advances in science generated inside the university which are not easily understood by these educators. Based on this, we planned and developed a one-week theoretical and practical course. The following themes were covered in theoretical classes: cancer, AIDS, animal cloning, transgenic plants and animals, and recombinant DNA. In the practical classes the teachers had the opportunity to observe the following methodologies: electrophoresis, liquid chromatography (HPLC), PCR, and spectrophotometry. Also, they had an introduction to research on the Internet. Among the 135 enrolled candidates (24% male, 76% female; 22-54 years old; graduated between 1972-1999; 4 months to 33 years of teaching experience; 95% teaching in the greater São Paulo area and 5% in other areas in the state; 11% teaching in private and public schools, 85% teaching in public schools only, and 4% teaching in private schools only) 30 were selected. Preference was given to those teaching in public schools, graduated before 1995, and those who were school coordinators. The distribution profile of the 30 selected teachers was: 30% male, 70% female; 26-54 years old; graduated between 1972-1995 in Biology; 1 to 33 years of teaching experience; 90% teaching in the greater São Paulo area and 10% in other areas in the state; 27% are school coordinators, and 100% teaching in public schools. An evaluation questionnaire was filled out by the teachers at the end of the course. Based on their answers we were able to verify that they found the information given during the course very useful for their teaching practice. We conclude that our objectives, i.e. updating the teachers, were reached and we believe that this type of course should be held on other occasions.