

# LatAm FINGERS: Overcoming Barriers for a Dementia Prevention Trial Startup

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## Abstract

**Background:** The LatAm-FINGERS initiative is a non-pharmacological intervention trial to prevent cognitive impairment in 12 Latin American countries. Our aim is to describe the challenges faced when launching a multi-country trial and the strategies used to tackle them. The principal challenges included: 1) Training personnel from the different teams in trial procedures, 2) Assessing the training results, and 3) To provide support regarding the trial set-up on the different sites. Another barrier is that centers are separated in distance and time zones and languages (Spanish, Portuguese, and English).

**Method:** A set of technological solutions were selected to face the challenges due to COVID-19 restrictions. a) Specialists provided online training for the different interventions, the training sessions were recorded, and subtitles in the alternate language were provided. b) Training was assessed using a web-based campus with questionnaires and certifications. c) Support was provided through two ad-hoc designed platforms. We created a WhatsApp Chatbot to assist investigators 24/7, automatically answering questions, sending resources, and reporting difficulties. The Chatbot also includes a database system to register adverse events reports, and report them to the clinical core. Finally, a LatAm FINGERS Consulting Room was built to provide weekly online sessions

**Result:** Until now, 16 in-vivo online sessions were provided to 203 trainees, 15 multilingual videos summarizing essential aspects of intervention, and six tutorials solving the most common problems were uploaded in the web-based campus with multiple language subtitles. A total of 93 participants received complete certification for the trial. Nine Consulting Room meetings have been carried out, and more than 30 conflicts have been solved. Chatbot has answered a mean of 12 daily questions since its implementation.

**Conclusion:** The LatAm Fingers team was able to launch in December 2021, overcoming the challenges and barriers generated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Results show how feasibility can be achieved for a study encompassing a vast territory of low-income

countries with diverse ethnic backgrounds in pandemic times. The set of innovative tools implemented could work as inspiration to other trials and collaborate to make the research in the region feasible.