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KAP STUDY ON HIV/AIDS AMONG FIRST YEAR NURSING STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT: BACKGROUND: AIDS is a global health problem today. Inadequate knowledge, negative attitudes and risky practices are major hindrances in preventing spread of HIV. This KAP study was conducted to assess current knowledge of HIV among 1st year nursing students at the point of entry to medical course as they are at higher risk of acquiring the infection. **METHODOLOGY:** 162 nursing students at the point of entry to medical course (1st year) were given a pre-tested close ended questionnaire. **RESULTS:** Overall knowledge about AIDS was found to be 100%. TV was the main source of information. Majority of students surveyed were aware that HIV can be transmitted by sexual intercourse (96.4%). Misconceptions were found to exist regarding modes of transmission, prognosis and prevention. Positive attitudes towards HIV/AIDS were observed among 85% of responders. **CONCLUSION:** Despite adequate knowledge about HIV/AIDS among nursing student's misconception about route of transmission were found. Negative attitudes to HIV/AIDS and risky practices were also present. Awareness programmes should be initiated among nursing students (Bsc/Diploma) in 1st year itself, so that lacunae can be rectified.

KEYWORDS: Knowledge, Attitudes, Practices, HIV/AIDS, Nursing students.

INTRODUCTION: HIV/AIDS has emerged as the single most formidable challenge to public health, human rights and development in the new millennium AIDS is a global health problem today.¹ According to National AIDS Control Organization of India, the prevalence of AIDS in India in 2011 was 0.27.² Students are exposed to the risk of being victim of HIV/AIDS. As there is no cure as such for AIDS and an effective vaccination still remains at dream, health education is the only method to prevent or control this scourge. There are myths about the mode of transmission of disease even among literates. After the intensification of health education campaign in schools, it is presumed that students who seek entry to medical courses have acquired adequate information about HIV.

AIM: Aim of the study was to assess and evaluate the existing level of knowledge about AIDS among students joining nursing college and to determine where there is any need of initiation of awareness program in the beginning of course itself to inculcate healthy habits and practice among the fresh students.

METHODOLOGY: A close ended questionnaire was given to students, 2wks after joining the clinical postings. The purpose of the study was explained to the students and they were asked to answer sincerely. The questionnaire was filled by them. They were given the form and asked to complete it without mutual consultation. Data was collected and analyzed.

RESULTS: Among the students, 37 were male and 127 were female.

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All the students had already heard of HIV/AIDS. Most of the students were aware of the fact that HIV is a fatal virus, for which no vaccine is available. [Table-1] Source of information about HIV/AIDS was obtained from TV. [Table-2] On assessing knowledge regarding transmission of AIDS, 96.4% knew that transmission could occur by unprotected sexual activities and 92.4% knew that it could be transmitted through infected needles. [Table-3]

Concerning knowledge about the disease, 63.4% knew that infected patient need not show signs or symptoms of AIDS, 91.2% knew that an AIDS affected patients could not defend itself from certain diseases. The fact that an AIDS patient could not be identified by how he or she looked was known to 89.88%. [Table-4] On the prevention aspects, proper use of condom 88.72%, avoiding promiscuity 76.4%, avoiding sharing of needles among drug users 87.78% and screening among blood for transfusion 85.3% were known to limit the spread of AIDS.

Interestingly 89.3% of students stated that sex education could be a preventive measure for HIV and AIDS. Most of the students knew about the modes of transmission, prevention aspects and knowledge about the disease as such. A study among undergraduate student of Delhi University in India revealed that, 58% students believed that one can get infection by oral route and 45% felt AIDS patient should not be allowed to mix in the society.³ In another survey in Pune among college students also, misconception in AIDS transmission, prevention and prognosis was seen to exist.⁴

Studies commissioned by global programme against AIDS in 1991 had found that information on transmission and prevention has reached a large segment of world's population. Despite that misconceptions exist like transmission by mosquito bite, transmission by sharing public toilets and pool, transmission by Infected person's belongings like combs and towels, transmission by touching infected persons by shaking hands, and transmission by sharing food utensils.^{5,6}

Information	Number of students	Percentage
Heard of AIDS	162	100%
Causative org i) Virus	158	97.53%
Causative org ii) Bacteria	4	2.47%
AIDS is Fatal	150	92.59%
AIDS is Curable	22	13.58%
Anti-AIDS Vaccine	3	1.85%

Table 1: Knowledge of students
Regarding general aspects of HIV/AIDS

Source of Information	Number of Students	Percentage
Television	103	63.58 %
Friends	26	23.46 %
Books and magazine	18	11.11 %
Internet	11	6.79 %
Radio	4	2.47 %

Table 2: Distribution of students according
to their source of information

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Question with correct response	Number of students	Percentage
Transmission by Unsafe sex (Yes)	156	96.4 %
Transmission by Blood transfusion from infected person (Yes)	148	91.2 %
Transmission by Needle prick (Yes)	149	92.4%
Transmission by Mother to Child (Yes)	141	87.3 %

Table 3: Distribution of students according to their change in knowledge about modes of transmission of HIV/AIDS and misconceptions about HIV/AIDS

Question with correct response	Percentage
Transmission by sharing public toilets and pool	0.8 %
Transmission by Infected person's belongings like combs and towels	13.6 %
Transmission by touching infected persons by shaking hands	19 %
Transmission by sharing food utensils	17 %
Transmission by mosquito bite	11.7 %

Table 4: Distribution of students according to their change in knowledge about misconceptions of HIV/AIDS (Yes Response)

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Preventive measures	Number of students	Percentage
Proper use of condom	153	94.44
Screening of blood donors	137	84.57
Sex with single partner	141	87.04
Sterilized needle	125	77.17
Health education	150	92.60

Table 5: Knowledge of students regarding preventive measures for HIV/AIDS

Question with correct response	Percentage
PLWHA have social right for studying or learning (Yes)	84.2 %
PLWHA should be helped, treated and supported (Yes)	85.3 %

Table 6: Distribution of students according to their change in attitude about PLWHA

CONCLUSION: Our study also shows that there is a lacuna in the knowledge about certain aspects of AIDS such as modes of transmission and prognosis. This lacunae has to be filled in by initiation of AIDS awareness programme in the first year of their study itself and by modifying the existing

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undergraduate medical curriculum and also by incorporating suitable chapters in basic medical text books on STD and HIV/AIDS.

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