

HIV/AIDS Knowledge and the Implications for Health Promotion Programs among Adolescents

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ABSTRACT

Present study on adolescents regarding HIV/AIDS knowledge and the implication for health promotion programs was conducted in Ghaziabad City. HIV/AIDS is most popular disease and increasing day by day. HIV/AIDS knowledge is limited among the general population in India, lack of knowledge among adolescents might be more alarming than lack of knowledge in the general population because one would expect that adolescents, as future leaders of the society and as educated individuals would be the most knowledgeable about HIV/AIDS.

For the presents study, 50 boys and 50 girls were selected randomly and were interviewed by self-constructed questionnaire. Data was analyzed by percentile technique and results indicate that both boys and girls have knowledge about HIV/AIDS but are not much aware about modes of transmission, symptoms, treatment and preventive measure. The data underscore the urgent need for HIV/AIDS related health promotion and prevention efforts targeting adolescents.

Keywords: HIV/AIDS, Health Promotion Program, Adolescents

World is a beautiful place and so is the experience of living in it, it would be tragic if this beautiful experience of living life is shortened by HIV/AIDS, when its prevention is within one's control, though not the cure. "AIDS is the Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome, where as HIV is the Human Immune Deficiency Virus. HIV is the virus that causes the disease that is called 'AIDS'". AIDS has no cure and its effect is the ultimate death of the infected person (WHO, 1985).

In India people in the age group of 15 -29 yrs comprise almost 25 percent of the country's population however, they account for 31 percent of AIDS burden. This clearly indicates that young people are at high risk of contracting HIV infection. There are now roughly 34 million people living with HIV/AIDS worldwide, out of which 2.5 million people are from India,

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according to officials, HIV/AIDS prevalence rate in Delhi is 0.21 percent of the total population and more than 15 million children have lost one or both parents to AIDS.

Adolescents and HIV/AIDS

Approximately one billion people-nearly one out of every six persons on the planet-are adolescents. According to WHO estimates, half of the world's HIV infection is found in adolescents, and youth between 15 and 24 years of age. Girls and young women are highly vulnerable to HIV/AIDS, and lack of education makes them so. Girls and women face heavier risks of HIV infection than men because their diminished economics and social status compromises their ability to choose safer and healthier life strategies (Mishra, 2005). Women forcibly exposed to HIV infection, for example rape and are being denied their right to life. Many socio, cultural and economic factors restrict women's right to health and right to access to health care facilities, further increasing their vulnerability to HIV (Singh, 2005). This is the time when they get interested in sexual relationships. Immature reproductive tracts make them more susceptible to HIV/AIDS. Discussing sex has also been a taboo among them. With the influence of media and the breakdown of traditional family structures, and in the absence of organized institutions for imparting sex education, they tend to learn about sexual and reproductive health from unreliable sources resulting in perpetuation of myths regarding safe sex and reproductive health.

OBJECTIVE

To assess the knowledge and implications for health promotion programs regarding HIV/AIDS among adolescents.

METHODOLOGY

Multistage stratified random sampling technique was used for selection of samples. Ghaziabad City has been selected purposively as it is convenient to the researcher. Total sample was 100 (boys-50, girls-50) were selected. A self constructed interview-cum-questionnaire schedule was prepared by researcher and administered on adolescents. Analysis of data was done by percentile technique.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION-

The collected data was tabulated and the results obtained are presented under the following tables:-

Table 1: Distribution of respondents according to source of information regarding HIV/AIDS

Source of Information	Male (n=50)	Female (n=50)	Total (n=100)
Television	40%	50%	45%
Radio	32%	15%	46%
Newspaper	22%	8%	30%
Road side play	14%	10%	15%
NGO	12%	3%	15%
Friend	24%	6%	31%

Table 2: Distribution of respondents according to awareness regarding modes of transmission of HIV/AIDS

Modes of Transmission	No. of aware students (%)		
	Male (n=50)	Female (n=50)	Total (n=100)
Unprotected sexual intercourse	54%	24%	78%
Homosexual intercourse	22%	6%	26%
Infected Blood transfusion	52%	19%	72%
Sharing needles/syringes/blades	56%	19%	76%
HIV infected Mother to baby	39%	15%	54%

Table 3: Distribution of respondents according to myths regarding HIV/AIDS

Myths	No. of students with 'Yes' Responses (%)		
	Male (n=50)	Female (n=50)	Total (n=100)
Mosquito bite can spread HIV/AIDS	15%	6%	21%
HIV/AIDS can spread through kissing	15%	4%	18%
HIV/AIDS can spread through touching an infected person	11%	4%	14%
Sharing same clothes can spread HIV/AIDS	10%	5%	14%
Eating together can spread HIV/AIDS	13%	6%	19%
Living together can spread HIV/AIDS	12%	4%	16%
HIV/AIDS can spread through common/public toilet	9%	3%	12%

Table 4: Distribution of respondents according to awareness regarding methods of prevention of HIV/AIDS

Methods of Prevention	No. of Aware Students (%)		
	Male (n=50)	Female (n=50)	Total (n=100)
Using condom during each Intercourse	60%	20%	79%
Not having sex with prostitute	35%	8%	42%
Having a single sexual partner	48%	12%	60%
Abstaining from homosexual Intercourse	23%	4%	26%
Screening of blood prior to transfusion	53%	23%	73%
Using sterilized/disposable syringes	53%	17%	69%

Table 5: Attitude of respondents towards people with HIV/AIDS

Responses (Yes)	Male (n=50)	Female (n=50)	Total (n=100)
Awareness regarding the difference between HIV +ve and AIDS	31%	10%	40%
Awareness regarding the symptoms of AIDS	31%	9%	39%
Knowledge about HIV/AIDS being cured	32%	21%	52%
PLWHA should be kept separate, isolated from others	25%	15%	39%
PLWHA should be socially supported, sympathized and cared	34%	14%	48%

CONCLUSION

In the present study all the students had heard about HIV/AIDS. These observations show the strength and effectiveness of media as source of information and very poor effort by health personnel which requires being strongly motivated. The awareness regarding modes of transmission and methods of prevention of HIV/AIDS was found to be significantly higher among boys as compared to girls. Thus adolescent girls lacked awareness regarding HIV/AIDS. 59% females indicating that HIV transmission could be prevented by using condom. 79% students thought that use of condom decrease the risk of getting AIDS. Study revealed that 20.5% of the students believed that mosquito bite could transmit the disease while 18.2% students thought that it could spread by sharing meals. In the current study 59.5% students stated that HIV/AIDS can be prevented by having a single sexual partner. Only 39.6% students in our study knew that HIV and AIDS are not synonymous.

SUGGESTIONS

Adolescents need to be taught about the body functions since ignorance perpetuates myths and mis-belief. School teachers play a key role in bringing about this desirable change and serially acceptable approaches to sex education such as letterbox approach may be used for providing scientific knowledge about sex and related issues. The challenge lies in developing programmes to spread awareness and to induce behavioral changes among them. The School Adolescent Education Programme has been focused to create awareness of HIV/AIDS and to inform adolescents, about the dangerous consequences of unsafe sex and encouraging them to use condoms.

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