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STUDY TO ASSESS AWARENESS ABOUT HIV / AIDS AMONG FIRST YEAR MBBS STUDENTS IN A MEDICAL COLLEGE, VIJAYPUR, KARNATAKA

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: The lack of awareness and misconceptions about HIV/AIDS in general population is responsible for rapid spread and social stigma & discrimination in our country. Many studies have revealed that early educational interventions can reduce the Knowledge Attitude Practice (KAP) gap among health professionals. This study was conducted to assess awareness regarding HIV/AIDS in newly admitted medical students.

Methodology: A cross sectional study was conducted on MBBS students of BLDEU Shri B. M. Patil medical college Vijaypur from December 2015 to January 2016.A total of 135 students were interviewed using pretested questionnaire. Descriptive statistics was used to analyze the data.

Results-Awareness among students about HIV was good. All the students (100%) were conscious about HIV/AIDS disease, its causative agent and diagnostics test. Majority of the students were aware about the modes of transmission and preventive approaches. Very few misconceptions were observed like spread by mosquito bite.

Conclusion –The results of our study are encouraging as most of students had good awareness regarding HIV/AIDS disease. Role of media & IEC activities are very important to spread the awareness among general population. These measures will help to reduce the misconception and indifferent attitude towards the HIV infected patients.

Key words: HIV/AIDS, awareness, medical students

INTRODUCTION

The acquired immuno-deficiency syndrome is a fatal illness caused by retrovirus known as the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) which breaks down the body's immune system, leaving the victim vulnerable to a host of life-threatening opportunisticinfection, neurological disorders, or unusual malignancies[1].HIV/ AIDS within decades of its described existence in 1981, has reached status of one of the most important public health disease. It is now the leading cause of mortality in Africa and the fourth leading cause of death worldwide[2].The first AIDS case in India was detected in Chennai in 1986. Now India accounts for 10% of worlds infected population and in sheer numbers it is second largest population of HIV infected individuals. According to National AIDS Control Organization (NACO), the total number of people living with HIV/AIDS (PLHA) in India (2009) was estimated at 24 lakh (19.3 – 30.4). Declining trend is observed from estimated level of 0.41% in 2000 through 0.36% in 2006 to 0.31% in 2009. All the high prevalence states show a clear declining trend in adult HIV prevalence[3]. Young people are vulnerable to HIV infections because of risk-taking behavior and negligentattitude towards preventative measures[4].The main mode of HIV

transmission in India is heterosexual intercourse with commercial sex workers, long distance truck drivers and migrant labour serving as vehicles of spread except in North Eastern states were Intravenous Venous (IV) drug users are common. Other routes of infection are transfusion of blood and blood products and transplacental[5].The lack of awareness and misconceptions about HIV/AIDSin general population is responsible for rapid spread and social stigma & discrimination in our country.[6]

The World Health Organization's in its report on the role of HIV-related medical education in the South Asia region has stressed the importance of including training in sensitivity, communication skills, and the development of compassionate attitudes toward HIV infected patients in the medical curricula[7]. Many studies have revealedthat early educational interventions can reduce the Knowledge Attitude Practice (KAP) gap among health professionals [8, 9].Hence the present study was conducted to assess awareness regarding HIV/AIDS in newly admitted medical students. This opportunity was also used to educate and remove misconception about HIV/AIDS.

METHODOLOGY

A cross sectional study was conducted on MBBS students of BLDEU Shri B.M.Patil medical college Vijaypur from December 2015 to January 2016.Informed oral consent was taken from the students before administering questionnaire to them.A total of 135 students were interviewed using pretested questionnaire and the data was analyzed using Microsoft excel software. Descriptive statistics was used to analyze the data.

RESULTS

It was observed that all the students (100%) were conscious about HIV/AIDS disease and they have correct knowledge of its causative agent. 98.5% students were aware about availability of diagnostics test. Majority of students (94.8%) are aware that once infected with HIV, there is no cure. Only 48.1% students were having knowledge regarding availability of treatment.

Table 1: Awareness about HIV / AIDS (n=135)

Awareness	Male (n=80) (%)	Female (n=55) (%)	Total (n=135) (%)
Heard about HIV/AIDS	80 (100)	55 (100)	135 (100)
Caused by virus	80 (100)	55 (100)	135 (100)
Diagnostic tests available	79 (98.75)	54 (98.18)	133 (98.52)
Disease is incurable	75 (93.75)	53 (96.36)	128 (94.81)
Treatment available	42 (52.5)	23 (41.82)	65 (48.15)

Table 2: Source of information about HIV / AIDS (n=135)

Source of information	Male (n=80) (%)	Female (n=55) (%)	Total (n=135) (%)
Media (print and electronic)	59(73.7)	43(78.1)	102 (75.5)
Doctors / health workers	46 (83.7)	32 (58.1)	78 (57.7)
Friends & family	32 (58.1)	33 (60)	65 (48.1)
Others	21 (38.1)	27 (49.15)	48 (35.5)

Table 3: Knowledge about modes of transmission (n=135)

Modes of transmission	Male (n=80) (%)	Female (n=55) (%)	Total (n=135) (%)
Multiple sexual partners	80 (100)	55 (100)	135 (100)
Transfusion of blood and its products	80 (100)	55 (100)	135 (100)
Sharing of needles	80 (100)	55 (100)	135 (100)
Intravenous drug users	80 (100)	55 (100)	135 (100)
Mother to child Transmission	76 (95.0)	52 (94.54)	128 (94.8)

Table 4: Misconception about modes of transmission (n=135)

Misconceptions about Modes of transmission	Male (80)	Female (55)	Total (n=135)
Mosquito bite	0 (0)	2 (3.64)	2 (1.48)
Kissing & shaking hands	1 (1.25)	0 (0)	1 (0.74)
Sharing clothes	1 (1.25)	1 (1.82)	2 (1.48)
Sharing food and utensils	1 (1.25)	1 (1.82)	2 (1.48)

Table 5: Awareness about Preventive measures (n=135)

Awareness about Preventive measures	Male (n=80) (%)	Female (n=55) (%)	Total (n=135) (%)
Avoid Multiple Sex Partners	80 (100)	55 (100)	135 (100)
Use condoms	80 (100)	53 (96.36)	133 (98.52)
Safe Blood/ its products	81 (101.25)	51 (92.73)	132 (97.78)
Avoid Sharing of Needles	78 (97.5)	51 (92.73)	129 (95.56)
Avoid intravenous drug users	75 (93.75)	52 (94.55)	127 (94.07)

About75.5% students had gained information from print and electronic media followed by other sources like health staff (57.7%) and others 38.8%. The above results infers that media plays very important role in creating awareness among people.

All the students answered correctly about different modes of transmission of HIV/AIDS, except transfer of infection from pregnant mother to child, 94.8% students answered correctly.

It was good to observe that very few students had the misconceptions about modes of transmission by mosquito bite (1.4%), kissing and shaking hands (0.5 %), Sharing clothes (1.4%), Sharing food and utensils (1.4 %).

It was observed that majority of students had good knowledge about preventive measures. Majority opined that they should avoid multiple sex partners (100%) and promote use of condoms (98.6%) & safe blood (97.7%) as effective method of halting HIV transmission.

DISCUSSION

Our study has observed good knowledge about HIV/AIDS among first year MBBS students.All the students (100%) were conscious about HIV/AIDS disease and they have correct knowledge of its causative agent. 98.5% students were aware about availability of diagnostics test.Only 48.1% students were having knowledge regarding availability of treatment. About 75.5% students had gained information from print and electronic media followed by other sources like health staff (57.7%) and others 38.8%. All the students answered correctly about different modes of transmission of HIV/AIDS, except transfer of infection from pregnant mother to child, 94.8% students answered correctly. Few students had the misconceptions about modes of transmission by mosquito bite (1.4%), kissing and shaking hands (0.5 %). Majority of students had good knowledge about preventive measures. Majority opined that they should avoid multiple sex partners (100%) and promote use of condoms (98.6%).

Similar study conducted in Uttarakhand among medical students by Ravi Shankar et al[4] reported that all the students (100%) have heard the name of HIV/AIDS and they have correct knowledge of the causative agent and majority (96%) correctly answered that the infection is incurable. Three-fourth of them had correct knowledge about the availability of test to detect the infection and few students (43%) had knowledge about treatment option.About 88% of them had correct knowledge about unavailability vaccines to prevent infection.

Observation of our study and Samantet al [10] showed that knowledge among medical students is better when compared to first year nursing students [11]. In a study conducted by Brij Mohan& Vashist[12] among nursing students found that 10% of nursing students reported vaccine availability to prevent HIV.Knowledge regarding modes of transmission among students are better in our study compared to Ravi Shankar et al[4]were students had correct information about different modes of transmissions viz. sexual route (98%), transmission through infected blood or its products (90%), mother to child transmission (78%), and sharing of needle/syringes (89%) .

Similar results were observed from other studies conducted in India by Brijmohan S et al [12] and Koksal S et al [13]in Turkey. Misconceptions among our students were less compared to study byRavi Shankar et al[4]were students believed that the infection was transmitted by sharing of cloths (75%),food or utensils (86%),kissing and shaking hands (89%) and by insect bites (39%).

Many other studies have observed similar misconceptions about modes of transmission [14].These findings are comparable to study by Ravi Shankar et al[4] and Kumar A et al[11]

CONCLUSION

The results of our study are encouraging as most of students had good awareness regarding HIV/AIDS disease. Role of media is very important to spread the awareness among general population. Information Education and Communication (IEC) activities are powerful tool for spreading knowledge especially among rural and illiterates. These measures will help to reduce the misconception and indifferent attitude towards the HIV infected patients.

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