

KNOWLEDGE OF HIV/AIDS AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS OF BARODA UNIVERSITY

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SUMMARY

The aim of the present study was to know the current level of knowledge about AIDS/HIV among a sample of newly admitted students of M.S. University, Baroda. 500 newly admitted students were given a pretested questionnaire to inquire about their current knowledge about HIV/AIDS and need for sex education, etc. Data of 401 students was analysed 222 (55.4%) students did not know what AIDS was ! Only 148 (36.9%) knew about condom use as a preventive measure. 255 (63.6%) students felt the need for sex education in schools and 242 (60.3%) expressed the need for further information/education on AIDS. The current HIV/AIDS information is grossly inadequate.

INTRODUCTION

Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) came to be known in India in 1986 and from the available data it is clear that it has come to stay. As of March 1993 National AIDS Control Organisation (NACO) reports that we in India have 11849 Human Immune Deficiency Virus (HIV) positive cases out of

1659412 individuals tested; and no part of our country is free of HIV infection (NATH, 1993).

As long as we do not have a vaccine against HIV, AIDS prevention depends only on health education and behavioural changes based on AIDS awareness, particularly among young people who are prone to risky behaviour.

The present study was carried out with the aim of knowing what is the current status of AIDS awareness among

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1st year college students.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

Students newly admitted to M.S. University, Baroda come for their compulsory health checkup at Shree Sayaji General Hospital and Medical College, Baroda. 500 students of the Faculty of Arts and Commerce were given a pretested questionnaire on first come first serve basis with a request to fill it up and return within 2 days. The questionnaire was designed to know their knowledge and awareness about various aspects of HIV/AIDS like aetiology, mode of transmission, diagnosis, facilities available (to them) for counselling, their source of information on AIDS, need for sex education and further education about AIDS. 401 responses were received. This data was analysed and presented in this paper.

RESULTS

401 out of 500 students responded and returned the questionnaire. There were 92 (23%) males and 309 (67%) female respondents.

As shown in Table - I, 46 (50%) males and 104 (33.7%) females knew that AIDS is an infective communicable disease while 44 (47.8%) males and 178 (57.6%) females stated that AIDS was not an infective disease. Aetiology of AIDS - HIV virus was known to only 25 (27.2%) males and 89 (28.8%) females. Students; 56 (60%) males and 204 (66%) females students did not know the aetiology while 7 (6.7%) and 2 (0.6%) male and female students respectively thought it to be a bacterial infection. HIV transmission is

possible to everyone was known to 47 (51.1%) males and 183 (59.2%) female students; rest either did not know it or thought it could not infect children.

To know their knowledge about communicability of HIV; students were questioned whether HIV could be transmitted by casual contacts or not? and, it was observed that 21 (22.8%) males and 73 (23.6%) females thought it could be!

Baroda has facility for Enzyme Linked Immuno Sorbent Assay (ELISA) testing for H.I.V. positively. Only 11 (12%) male and 57 (18.4%) female students knew about it. Similarly only 12 (3.9%) students knew about centres which have facility to confirm the diagnosis of AIDS. Government of Gujarat runs a counselling centre at Medical College, Baroda. Similarly, a counselling centre is run on the university campus by National Service Scheme (NSS). Only 10 (10.9%) males and 49 (15.9%) female students were aware of these centres existing in Baroda (Table II).

HIV has several established modes of transmission. In the present study, as shown in Table III, 304 (75.8%) students knew about heterosexual transmission, 213 (53.7%) knew about blood-borne transmission, 180 (44.8%) knew about mother to baby transmission, while 38 (9.4%) did not know about any mode of transmission; homosexual transmission was known to 73 (18.2%).

As shown in Table IV, students were questioned on "safe sex", 151 (37.6%) students suggested mutually faithful single partner sex while 148 (36.9%) suggested condom use as a means to safe sex. 91 (22.6%) suggested "no sex" with

Table II
Information on availability of HIV testing confirmation counselling and need for education

	Male (n=92)			Female (n=309)		
	Yes	No	D.N.K.	Yes	No	D.N.K.
Availability of HIG testing facility	11(12.0%)	02(2.2%)	13(14.1%)	57(18.4%)	12(3.9%)	239(77.4%)
Availability of confirmation of diagnosis	-	01(9.8%)	74(80.4%)	12(3.9%)	50(16.1%)	247(80.0%)
AIDS guidance and counselling cell	10(10.9%)	-	74(80.4%)	49(15.9%)	10(3.2%)	249(80.6%)
Need for sex education in school	66(71.7%)	02(2.2%)	18(19.6%)	186(60.2%)	35(11.3%)	85(27.5%)
Need for further education on AIDS	58(63.0%)	11(12.0%)	18(19.6%)	184(59.6%)	59(19.1%)	65(21.0%)

D.N.K. = Do Not Know

Did not respond

Did not respond

Did not respond

Did not respond

Did not respond

Did not respond

Table III
Knowledge about HIV Transmission

	Male	Female	Total
Hetero sexual	70(76.0%)	234(75.7%)	304(75.8%)
Homo sexual	32(34.8%)	41(13.3%)	73(18.2%)
Blood borne	47(51.0%)	166(53.7%)	213(53.7%)
Perinatal	29(31.5%)	151(48.9%)	180(44.8%)
Thr breast feeding	19(20.6%)	41(13.3%)	60(14.9%)
Air/Water borne	05(5.4%)	33(10.7%)	38(9.4%)
No information	08(8.7%)	44(14.2%)	52(12.9%)

Table IV
Information of Safe Sex

	Male	Female	Total
Mutually faithful single partner sex	37(40.2%)	114(36.9%)	151(37.6%)
Use of condom	41(44.6%)	107(34.6%)	148(36.9%)
"No" to multipartner sex	19(20.6%)	61(19.7%)	80(19.9%)
No sex with AIDS positive persons	23(25.0%)	68(22.0%)	91(22.6%)

Table V
Source of AIDS information

	Male	Female	Total
Television	65	248	313
Radio	33	111	144
Newspaper	38	138	176
Advertisements	30	93	123
Education programmes (other than TV)	25	95	120

sex and condom use are means to safe sex. In Delhi study 93% students had similar response. Newspapers as compared to TV was a more common source of information in Delhi study, however, in the present study TV was common than newspaper.

Present study questioned them on the need for sex education and further education on AIDS. Educational efforts are likely to succeed because here in the study, need to know more about AIDS and need for starting sex education in school have been expressed as felt needs. The analysis on the sources of current AIDS information strongly suggest that effective use of mass media for AIDS education/information may lead to behavioural change and thereby prevention.

RECOMMENDATIONS

(1) There is a definite need for AIDS education among young university students.

(2) As it is a felt-need, it would be desirable to give a priority and getting students involved in our efforts at AIDS education would be more fruitful.

(3) AIDS education at school level is an expressed need by those who have completed schooling without it. This needs to be further explored.

(4) Detailed explanations on modes of transmission of HIV and "Safe sex" need to be incorporated in our efforts at AIDS education.

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