

Original article

Knowledge and Attitude of Students regarding HIV/AIDS in Peshawar University.

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ABSTRACT

Objectives: To determine the knowledge and attitude of medical and non-medical students of Peshawar University regarding HIV/AIDS.

Methods: This cross sectional observational study was conducted on students of Khyber Medical College and Peshawar University Departments of English, Urdu, Statistics, Mathematics, Economics, Chemistry and Botany students from January 2005 to October 2005. Students were divided into four groups. They were asked to fulfill a pre-designed questionnaire. The variables assessed were their knowledge of disease (etiology, mode of transmission, and prevention) and attitude towards AIDS patients.

Results: A total of 500 students participated, with 150 (30%) pre-clinical students, 100 (20%) clinical students and 125 (25%) each science and art students. The male female ratio was 2:1; mean age of respondents was 22 ± 1.5 years. Seventy nine percent students knew the causative agent of the disease and 94.6% agreed that it is a communicable disease. Only 29% of students were willing to share daily use items with these patients with fear that they might get disease. Male students agreed on utilization of sterilized blades for shave (97.2%), and disposable syringe for IV medications (92%). They prefer blood transfusion screened for HIV (93.6%).

Conclusion: There is a satisfactory awareness among the medical students entering into the profession. An acceptable difference was recorded among clinical, preclinical and

non-clinical students regarding their knowledge and attitude about HIV and AIDS. (Rawal Med J 2008;33:18-20).

Key word: HIV/AIDS, Awareness among students, attitude, University of Peshawar.

INTRODUCTION

The estimated number of HIV/AIDS cases in Pakistani adults age 15 to 45 years, by year 2003 was 74,000 and female patients of the same age was 8900.¹ Studies have shown that more than 90% of the students had received satisfactory education on HIV/AIDS.² The source of knowledge ranged from television, teachers, pamphlets, newspapers, radio, health care workers, and friends and from their parents. Students were quite knowledgeable about transmission of HIV through semen, blood, and vaginal fluid.³ Reports from Pakistan regarding knowledge of students showed that 85% had awareness about HIV/AIDS.^{4,5}

Present study was designed to determine the knowledge of medical and non-medical students about HIV/AIDS in Peshawar University in order to assess the level of AIDS education they have received.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

A cross sectional observational study was conducted among the students of Khyber Medical College, English, Urdu, Statistics, Mathematics, Economics, Chemistry and Botany departments of Peshawar University. A total of 500 students were randomly selected. Students were categorized into four groups. Group I (preclinical students), group II (clinical students), group III (science students) and group IV (Art students). The variables assessed were their knowledge of disease (etiology, mode of transmission, and prevention), attitude towards AIDS affected patients. A pre-designed questionnaire was distributed among these students during their duty timings, and they were asked to fill the questionnaire.

RESULTS

Out of 500 participants, 150 (30%) were pre-clinical students, 100 (20%) clinical students and 125 (25%) each science and art students. The male female ratio was 2:1; mean age of respondents was 22 ± 1.5 years.

Table 1. Knowledge about HIV/AIDS. [Number=500 (%)].

Question	Group I, non clinical medical students (n=150)	Group II, clinical medical students (n=100)	Group III, science students (n=125)	Group IV, art students (n=125)	Percentage (%) of total (n=500) with correct answer
What AIDS stands for?	137 (91.33)	100 (100)	93(77.4%)	81(64.8%)	82.20
Name causative agent of AIDS?	133 (88.66)	100 (100)	84(67.2)	78(62.4%)	79
Is AIDS a communicable disease?	137 (91.33)	100 (100)	119(95.2)	117(93.6)	94.6
Which systems are primarily involved?	135 (90)	100 (100)	52(41.6)	40(32)	65.4
How a typical AIDS patient presents with?	128 (85.33)	97 (97)	38(30.4)	24(19.2)	57.4
Can a healthy looking man be infected with HIV, explain?	112 (74.67)	86 (86)	54(43.2)	45(36)	59.40
Can you explain precautionary measures to prevent HIV infection?	125 (83.33)	96 (96)	82(65.6)	69(55.25)	74.5
Is there any treatment available for AIDS?	110 (73.33)	72(57.6)	56(44.8)	66.8	66.8
Can you name a few pharmaceutical agents used for treatment of AIDS?	76 (50.66)	82 (82)	4(3.2)	-	32.39
Is there any vaccine available for AIDS?	2 (2)	6 (6)	0	0	1.6

Seventy nine percent students knew the causative agent of the disease and 94.6% agreed that it is a communicable disease. Sixty-five percent knew about the primary system involved and 57.5% had the knowledge about typical presentation of the patient with AIDS. Seventy-four percent knew the preventive measures of disease (table 1). Only 29%

of students were willing to share daily use things with these patients with fear that they might get disease (table 2).

Ninety-four percent preferred blood transfusion screened for HIV.

Table 2. Attitude of students toward HIV/AIDS patients: [Number=500(%)].

Attitude of students toward HIV/AIDS patients.	Group I (n=150)	Group II (n=100)	Group III (n=125)	Group IV (n=125)	Percentage(%) of total (n=500) with correct answer
Would you like to share daily use things with HIV/AIDS patients?	21 (14)	15 (15)	41 (32.8)	68 (54.4)	29
Would You like to assist these patients in providing health care services?	150 (100)	100 (100)	125 (100)	125 (100)	10
What will be your attitude to AID patient if she/he is your wife/husband?	129 (86.66)	96 (96)	42 (33.6)	12 (9.6)	55.2

DISCUSSION

In present study 94.6% agreed that it is a communicable disease. A study from Karachi among female students regarding AIDS, 90% knew that it is sexually transmitted and 88% knew about the spread of HIV by the use of contaminated needles.⁵ A similar study showed 61.0% mentioned avoiding promiscuous sex, 49.3% knew use of condoms and 60.2% were aware that AIDS can be prevented by avoiding homosexuality.⁶ Sixty-eight percent and 70.2% students respectively held the view that avoiding used needles for injections and laboratories for screening blood or blood products can prevent AIDS.⁶ In

general, studies of college students indicate that they have a relatively high level of knowledge about HIV/AIDS transmission and prevention.^{7,8} However, only 61% knew that people with the AIDS virus do not necessarily look sick.⁹

Regarding attitude of students towards HIV infected people, only 29% of students were willing to share daily use things with these patients with fear that they might get disease. Results from a study in West Bengal revealed subjects of any category of people in general were not aware and shows negative attitude towards AIDS. Significant differences were present among the categories except between illiterate and primary and secondary and higher educated group of people about awareness and attitude towards AIDS.¹⁰ Various techniques of promotion have been tried through out the world including television dramas, mass media and school curricula in order to make the quality of life of people living with HIV/AIDS better and to reduce the stigma.¹¹ The term HIV/AIDS is interchangeable with lifestyles being gay or being a user of IV drugs; if you are positive for AIDS, you must be gay and you must have used IV drugs. The stigmatizations of these diseases have resulted in the isolation of, and the negative response, to being tested.^{12,13}

In present study 97% students were using new branded blades for shave and disposable syringe for IV medications (92%). Laboratory staff needs education in areas of use of personal protective equipment, specimen collection and processing, centrifuge--related hazards, infective hazards waste disposal and provision and use of Kits.¹⁴ A recent study indicated that dental students' knowledge on HIV/AIDS generally increased as they progressed throughout their curriculum but their utilization of barrier techniques for infection control and clinical protocol, lacked consistency and compliance.¹⁵ In conclusion, there is a satisfactory awareness among the medical students entering into the profession. Non-medical students lacked awareness about the disease. An acceptable difference was recorded among clinical, preclinical and non-clinical students regarding their knowledge and attitude of the disease. HIV education should be part of curriculum among medical and non medical students.

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