

K A P STUDY ON HIV / AIDS AMONG FIRST YEAR MBBS STUDENTS

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This Kap (Knowledge, Attitude, Practical) study was to assess the current level of knowledge among first year M.B.B.S. students about AIDS at the point of entry to medical course. One hundred and seventy-one students were given a pre-tested close ended questionnaire. Overall level of knowledge about AIDS was found to be 64.91%. Male students were found to have better knowledge regarding transmission and prevention of AIDS than female students. Misconceptions were found to exist regarding mode of transmission, prognosis and prevention. Awareness programmes should be initiated among M.B.B.S. students in the first year itself, so that, lacunae can be rectified.

Key words : KAP study, AIDS, Medical students

AIDS is a global problem today. Infection is spreading very fast in India. By the year 2000, it is estimated that around 7 million people would have been infected with HIV in India alone. There is no cure as such for AIDS and an effective vaccination still remains a dream. Health education is the only method to prevent or control this scourge. There are myths about the modes of spread of disease even among the literates. After the intensification of health education campaigns about AIDS in schools, it is presumed that students who seek entry to medical courses have acquired adequate information about AIDS.

Aim of the study was to assess and evaluate the existing level of knowledge about AIDS among girls and boys joining medical college and to determine whether there is any need for initiation of awareness programme in the beginning of the course itself to inculcate healthy habits and practices among fresh entrants.

Materials and Methods

A total of 171, first year M.B.B.S. students were available for the study. A close ended questionnaire was given to the students, a week after joining the course. It was pre-tested one month prior to the study. The purpose of the study was explained to the students and they were asked to answer question sincerely. The questionnaire was filled in the class in the presence of invigilators. They were given half an hour to complete

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the form without mutual consultation. Data was collected and analysed.

Results

Among the students, 42 out of 171, were from North India and the remaining from South India. There were 71 females and 100 males. Knowledge of sex was obtained from friends in 64.91% and from books and magazines in 56.14%. Fourteen males admitted to have indulged in sexual practice.

On assessing knowledge regarding transmission of AIDS (Table I) 76.6% knew that it could be transmitted through infected needles, and 89.4% knew that transmission could occur by unprotected sexual activities,.

Concerning knowledge about the disease, 62.57% knew that infected patients need not show signs or symptoms of AIDS, 90.06 knew that an AIDS affected patient's body 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 88.89%.

On the preventive aspects, proper use of condoms (87.72%), avoiding promiscuity (78.36%), avoiding sharing needles among drug users (74.85%) and screening blood for transfusion (87.72%) were known to limit the spread of AIDS.

The average knowledge regarding AIDS transmission was found to be significantly higher in males ($z=2.247$: $P < 0.05$). Knowledge regarding prevention was also significantly higher in males ($z=4.2115$ $p < 0.001$).

In the attitude towards sex, 18% of males and 7.04% females felt that it was alright for girls to have sex before marriage. Twenty-four percent of males and 8.45% females felt that it was alright for boys to have sex before marriage. Thirty-four percent of males and 8.45% females felt that use of condoms during sex was not enjoyable, 56.34% females and 51% males felt that other students should be informed if a student is affected with AIDS. Majority (94.73%) felt that testing for HIV should be made compulsory before marriage.

Discussion

There were 64.91 percent of correct response from the students about the mode of transmission, prevention aspect and knowledge about disease as such. A study among undergraduate students of Delhi University in India revealed that 58% students believed one could get infection by oral route and 41% felt AIDS patients should not be allowed to mix in society.¹ In another survey in Pune among college students also, misconceptions in AIDS transmission, prevention and prognosis were seen to exist.² Studies commissioned by global programme against AIDS in 1991 has found that information on transmission and prevention has reached a large segment of the world's population. Despite that, misconceptions like transmission through insect bite and non-intimate touch exist.³ In this study also 25.74% believed that

mosquitoes could transmit infection and 8.77% believed that by wearing clothes of an affected patient one could get AIDS. In a study on AIDS by Department of Health Education in Calcutta, only 40% to 60% correct response was obtained from the preclinical students.⁴

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 lacuna has to be filled in by initiation of AIDS awareness programmes in the first year of their study itself, and by modifying the existing undergraduate medical curriculum and also by incorporating suitable chapters in the basic medical text books on STD and HIV/AIDS.

Table I. Knowledge regarding AIDS transmission

	Male (100)	Female (71)	Total (171)
Through infected needles	87 (87%)	44 (61.97%)	131 (76.6%) z= 3.75 p < 0.001
Through unprotected sex	92 (92%)	61 (85.92%)	153 (89.4%) z= 1.23 p < 0.05
By kissing someone who has AIDS	88 (88%)	51 (71.83%)	139 (81.29%) z= 2.59 p < 0.01
Pregnant woman transmitting infection to child	95 (95%)	57 (80.28%)	152 (88.89%) z= 3.07 p < 0.01
Bite of mosquitoes which has fed on patients with AIDs	77 (77%)	50 (70.42%)	127 (74.26%) z= 0.96 p < 0.05
Wearing clothes of AIDS patients	96 (96%)	60 (84.50%)	156 (91.23%) z= 2.436 p < 0.05

Table II . Knowledge about disease as such

	Male	Female	Total
Infected patient need not show sign or symptoms of AIDS	63 (63%)	44 (61.97%)	107 (62.57%) z= 0.27 p > 0.05
Body cannot defend itself from certain deiseases	97 (97%)	57 (80.28%)	154 (90.06%) z= 3.33 p / 0.001
HIV or AIDS can be cured if detected early	65 (65%)	45 (63.38%)	110 (64.33%) z= 0.218 p > 0.05
HIV patient can be identified by how he/she looks	96 (96%)	56 (78.87%)	107 (88.89%) z= 3.27 p / 0.001

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