

Knowledge and attitude of auto-rickshaw drivers about HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases

Sir,

Auto-rickshaws are the main mode of public transport in urban and semi-urban areas. These auto-rickshaws are a cheap and easily available source of public transport in most of the cities. Nagpur is one of the biggest cities and the second capital of Maharashtra. It is situated in the central part of India. As for many other cities; the auto-rickshaws are main mode of public transport in Nagpur city. As we all know, long distance drivers, i.e. truck and lorry drivers, are at a higher risk of acquiring various sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) including HIV/AIDS due to their high risk behavior. The auto-rickshaw drivers can also exhibit this high risk behavior. They are mobile throughout day and night and are consistently visiting red light areas of the city to ferry female sex workers and their clients to and from these areas. So, it is very important for their own and family's safety to have a fair knowledge of various STDs including HIV/AIDS. There have been several studies on the knowledge and attitude of long distance truck,^[1-5] bus,^[2,3] and taxi^[2-5] drivers about HIV/AIDS and other STDs; but very few studies have been carried out on auto-rickshaw drivers.^[5-8] Therefore, this cross-sectional study was conducted with the objective of finding the knowledge and attitude of auto-rickshaw drivers regarding sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS.

The period of study was from June 2006 to December 2008. Approval from institutional ethical committee was taken before commencing the study. A pilot study was done on 100 subjects to check the feasibility of the study and to test the proforma. Sample size for the main study was also calculated based on the findings of this pilot study. Subjects were conveniently selected from auto-rickshaw stand of Nagpur railway station after confirming that they had enough time to be interviewed and examined. Confidentiality of the study subjects was assured and maintained throughout the study. Informed consent of each study participant was taken before starting the interview.

A total 296 auto-rickshaw drivers were studied. Mean age of study subjects was 41.70 ± 9.05 years, with a

range of 20–65 years. 84.80% of the subjects belonged to the age group of 20–49 years which is considered to be the most vulnerable age for HIV/AIDS. 48% subjects were Hindus, 99.32% were ever married and 56.08% belonged to nuclear family. 9.80% subjects were illiterate and 46.96% belonged to upper lower socioeconomic class.

Table 1 shows the distribution of study subjects according to their knowledge and attitude regarding sexually transmitted infections including HIV/AIDS. 92.57% subjects had ever heard of HIV/AIDS, while 84.46% knew that HIV/AIDS was a sexually transmitted disease and 23.99% knew that HIV was the cause of AIDS. Only 5.07% had heard of any other STDs.

Most common source of knowledge regarding STDs including HIV/AIDS was television (70.27%). Other mentioned common sources of knowledge were banner/posters (32.09%), newspapers (30.41%), doctors (19.59%) and radio (12.16%).

Regarding knowledge of transmission routes of HIV/AIDS, the following results were found: both homo and heterosexual intercourse (58.78%), sharing of needles (50.34%), receiving infected blood (25.34%), from mother to her baby (22.64%), sharing razors or brushes (20.61%) and breast feeding (10.14%). 66.55% subjects said that condom use was necessary during each sexual intercourse to prevent HIV/AIDS, while 53.04% said that single unprotected sex could cause HIV/AIDS.

Regarding attitude towards persons living with HIV/AIDS, 53.04% subjects said that they would not avoid a person with HIV/AIDS, while 69.59% said they would remain friendly with persons living with HIV/AIDS and 69.93% said that people living with HIV/AIDS should be allowed to continue their work [Figure 1].

When the study subjects were further asked with whom they would like to discuss regarding STDs including HIV/AIDS, 200 (67.57%) subjects said that they would like to discuss it with doctors, while 65 (21.96%) subjects would like to discuss it with friends and 23 (7.77%) subjects would like to discuss it with relatives.

So, the level of knowledge of auto-rickshaw drivers

Table 1: Distribution of study subjects according to their knowledge and attitude regarding sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS (n = 296)

Knowledge regarding STDs including HIV/AIDS	Yes		No		Don't know/no response	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
General questions						
Have heard of HIV/AIDS	274	92.57	22	7.43	00	0.00
HIV is an STD	250	84.46	22	7.43	24	8.11
Have heard of any other STD	15	5.07	281	94.93	00	0.00
Knows cause of HIV/AIDS	71	23.99	199	67.23	26	8.78
Knowledge regarding transmission route						
Air	02	0.68	18	6.08	276	93.24
Water	04	1.35	16	5.41	276	93.24
Shaking hand	10	3.38	18	6.08	268	90.54
Razor/tooth brush	61	20.61	04	1.35	231	78.04
Public latrine/pool	08	2.70	08	2.70	280	94.60
Mosquitoes/bed bugs	24	8.11	06	2.03	266	89.86
Homosexual sex only	16	5.41	148	50.00	132	44.59
Heterosexual sex only	60	20.27	175	59.12	61	20.61
Both homo and heterosex	174	58.78	76	25.68	46	15.54
Sex with CSWs only	123	41.55	00	0.00	173	58.45
Mother to newborn	67	22.64	02	0.68	227	76.68
Breast feeding	30	10.14	10	3.38	256	86.48
Sharing of needle	149	50.34	00	0.00	147	49.66
Blood donation	82	27.70	14	4.73	200	67.57
Receiving infected blood	75	25.33	02	0.68	219	73.99
Single unprotected sex	157	53.04	71	23.99	68	22.97
Knowledge regarding fatality						
HIV/AIDS is fatal	235	79.39	20	6.76	41	13.85
Other STDs fatal	00	0.00	11	3.72	285	96.28
Knowledge regarding diagnosis						
HIV/AIDS can be diagnosed	155	52.36	90	30.41	51	17.23
Other STDs can be diagnosed	00	0.00	11	3.72	285	96.28
Knowledge regarding treatment						
HIV/AIDS has treatment	98	33.11	138	46.62	60	20.27
Other STDs have treatment	06	2.03	07	2.36	283	95.61
Knowledge regarding prevention						
HIV/AIDS is preventable	203	68.58	45	15.20	48	16.22
Other STDs are preventable	11	3.72	00	0.00	285	96.28
Vaccine against HIV/AIDS	27	9.12	217	73.31	52	17.57
Can identify a person with HIV/AIDS by appearance	35	11.83	203	68.58	58	19.59
Regular condom use necessary to prevent HIV/AIDS and STD	197	66.55	65	21.96	34	11.49
Attitude regarding STDs including HIV/AIDS						
Will you avoid a person with HIV/AIDS	115	38.85	157	53.04	24	8.11
Will you remain friendly with person living with HIV/AIDS	206	69.59	66	22.30	24	8.11
Should people with HIV/AIDS to be allowed to do their work	207	69.93	65	21.96	24	8.11

regarding various STDs including HIV/AIDS was not satisfactory. It is recommended to make them aware regarding transmission route, safe sex and regular

condom use which can be done through health education campaigns by using mass media (i.e. TV, radio, newspaper) or by conducting health camps.

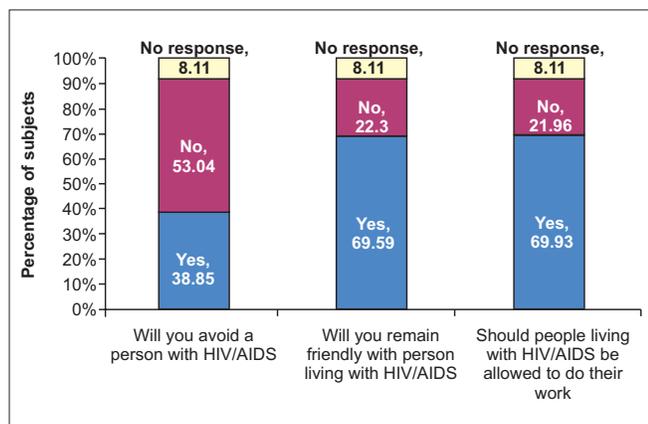


Figure 1: Distribution of study subjects according to their attitude toward people with HIV/AIDS (n=296)

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