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ASSESSMENT OF SCHOOL AND COLLEGE STUDENTS AWARENESS ABOUT AIDS IN URBAN AREA

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ABSTRACT

The first and foremost purpose of this study (survey) is to assess the extent of knowledge regarding AIDS/HIV among High school (IXth and Xth), Intermediate (XIth and XIIth) and Graduation (BA/B Com/B Sc/BCA/) students in urban area. The present study was a population based, cross sectional, analytical epidemiological design in the settings of an urban population in Moradabad, (UP) India, during Jan 2009 to April 2009. It was observed that a very large majority of students, of both gender and all educational standards had a positive and healthy attitude as they said that pre-marital or extra-marital sexual indulgence was not acceptable to them. However, a meagre proportion said that school and college students are at a high risk of getting AIDS. Regular structured AIDS education in School and College does go a long way in increasing the awareness and positively orienting their attitude regarding AIDS. Therefore to remove communication gap, the awareness should include the parents to insist their children to have an initiative for the concerned dialogue. This will cultivate rich dividends by positively orienting the college students who are soon going to be sexually active.

Key words: Human immuno deficiency virus, sexually transmitted diseases, heterosexual contact, knowledge and attitude.

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INTRODUCTION

India is one of the largest and most populated countries in the world, with over one billion inhabitants, of which around 2.4 million are currently living with HIV [1]. In terms of AIDS cases, the most recent estimate comes from August 2006, when total number of AIDS cases reported to NACO was 1,24,995. These figures are not accurate reflections of the actual situation as large number of AIDS cases goes unreported [2]. The government has however funded a small number of national campaigns to spread awareness about HIV/AIDS to complement the local level initiatives. On World AIDS Day 2007, India flagged off its largest national campaign till date, in the form of a seven-coach train [3]. A year later the train journey was completed, having travelled to 180 stations in 24 states and reaching around 6.2 million people with HIV/AIDS education and awareness [4]. For instance, a 2002 report by the CIA's National Intelligence Council predicted 20 to 25 million AIDS cases in India by 2010 which may be more than any other country in the world [5]. India's government responded by calling these figures completely inaccurate and accused those who cited them of spreading panic [6]. The government has also disputed predictions that India's epidemic is on an African trajectory, although it claims to acknowledge the seriousness of the crisis [7].

AIDS has turned into an endemic disease around the world including India. Therefore there is prevalently a requirement to know the standard of knowledge about Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) as Gonorrhoea and Syphilis among those who are sexually active. The survey is meant for school and college going student and has been devised in a fashion for the respondents so that they may thoroughly try out their hands to aware the other guys in the society.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The present study was a population based, cross sectional, analytical epidemiological design in the settings of an urban population in Moradabad, (U.P) India, during Jan 2009 to April 2009.

1. The study populations include students of high school, intermediate and degree classes.
2. This included 282 girls (96, 84 and 102 respectively from High School, Intermediate and Graduate standards), and 268 boys (49,111 and 108 from the above three educational levels respectively).
3. A questionnaire was developed based on earlier work done in schools of Maharashtra [8] and further modified on the advice of faculty member and other health personnel's.
4. The questions were made on a paper which served as a medium of interaction. The subjects were asked to answer the question in YES or NO and in case of optional question, the right option (either A or B or C or D or E or F) was to be written in front of given column.
5. Respondents were informed about the scope of study and assurance of full confidentiality. The papers were distributed to each one sitting in the class room and provided enough time to make the answer.
6. The papers were collected and analysed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings revealed that 282(132, 72, 78 in High School, Intermediate, Graduate respectively) out of the 282 girls (100%) and 268 (104, 94, 70 in HS, Inter, Grad respectively) out of 268 boys (100 %) had at least heard of either HIV, or AIDS or both. 99% of both girls and boys correctly knew that the infection is caused by a virus called Human Immuno Deficiency Virus (HIV) which subsequently leads to the disease, "AIDS". The remaining had either not heard of the name of "HIV" or else thought that "HIV" and "AIDS" were two unrelated entities. [Table I]

In general, the level of knowledge was much higher in intermediate level and graduate students as compared to high school level students and this level was statistically significant for certain facets like sexual contact, sharing of clothes (for male students only), transmission by blood (for girl students only) and social contact (for male students only). It was also noticed that for certain aspects, a higher proportion of male students had correct knowledge, as compared to their female counterparts. However one aspect regarding which they have poor knowledge is that social contact has no role in transmission of AIDS [Table II]. It was interestingly observed that while very few students, boys and girls, had correct knowledge that AIDS virus is transmitted by sexual route, a small minority only could identify syphilis and gonorrhea to be sexually transmitted. Studies have shown much higher knowledge of the preventive methods among rural as well as urban populations [9-13]. The proportion of children with correct knowledge about these STDs increased linearly from junior to senior educational standards, both for boys and girls. [Table III].

It was observed that a very large majority of students, from all educational standards, identified that "faithful couples" were not a high risk group. Similarly, a large majority identified that routine office workers were not a high risk group. They suppose the community sex workers (CSW) are the highest risk group. The level of knowledge was however lower in identifying that truck drivers, CSWs, professional blood donors and IVDUs as high risk groups. As regards these last four risk groups, the level of knowledge was particularly lower among the high school students and was lower in case of girl students. [Table IV].

It was observed that a very large majority of students, of both genders and all educational standards, had a positive and healthy attitude as they said that pre-marital or extra-marital sexual indulgence was not acceptable to them. However, a meagre proportion said that school/college students are at a high risk of getting AIDS. [Table V] Studies across India have shown that because of the increased exposure to various media mainly electronic (TV and radio), people have fair to good knowledge of various routes of spread including heterosexual contact, blood and its products and vertical transmission [9, 10, 13-16].

However, the point to be noted is that a considerable proportion of school and college children do perceive that they or their contemporaries are a high risk group for this infection and this attitudinal platform could be used successfully for instituting AIDS education in schools and colleges.



CONCLUSION

The level of general knowledge regarding AIDS among School and College student is moderate. Lack of knowledge exists about other STDs, high risk group and extent of security of Contraceptive. Regular structured AIDS education in School and College does go a long way in increasing the awareness as well positively orienting their attitude regarding AIDS. It is morally unacceptable for students talking about AIDS with their parents. Therefore to remove communication gap, the awareness should include the parents to insist their children to have an initiative for the concerned dialogue. This will cultivate rich dividends by positively orienting the college students who are soon going to be sexually active.

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Table I: The number of Respondents belonging to different education standard

No of Respondents	High school	Intermediate	Graduation	Total
Male	49	111	108	268
Female	96	84	102	282

Table II: Analysis of knowledge of subjects regarding mode of transmission of HIV/AIDS.

Mode of Transmission	Students having correct knowledge (%)					
	Male			Female		
	HS	Inter	Grad	HS	Inter	Grad
Mosquito or other Insect	12	14	42	8	12	31
Sexual intercourse	88	100	100	72	89	100
Sharing clothes with HIV infected person	69	34	11	44	66	95
Transfusion of blood Having AIDS virus	21	34	63	11	55	67
Social contact with Infected person	33	82	88	79	53	96
Improper sterilizes Syringes/needles	84	87	91	82	79	88

HS = High school classes, Inter = Intermediate classes, Grad = Graduate classes

Table III: Analysis of knowledge of subjects as regarding sexually transmitted diseases

(STDs)

STDs	Students having correct knowledge (%)					
	Male			Female		
	HS	Inter	Grad	HS	Inter	Grad
Syphilis	19	20	33	21	32	32
Gonorrhoea	19	20	33	21	32	32

HS = High school classes, Inter = Intermediate classes, Grad = Graduate classes

Table IV: Analysis of knowledge of subjects as regards high risk groups for HIV infection/AIDS

High risk groups	Students having correct knowledge (%)					
	Male			Female		
	HS	Inter	Grad	HS	Grad	Inter
Swapping couples	0	56	78	0	0	37
Faithful couples	39	21	19	11	12	5
Office worker	0	0	0	0	0	0
Truck Driver	16	19	19	6	5	47
Community Sex Worker	94	98	99	33	66	67
Professional Blood Donor	4	28	34	6	16	56
Intravenous Drug Abuser(IVUDs)	9	41	77	33	39	71

HS = High school classes, Inter = Intermediate classes, Grad = Graduate classes

Table V: Analysis of attitudes regarding sex and sex education

Parameters	Students having correct knowledge (%)					
	Male			Female		
	HS	Inter	Grad	HS	Inter	Grad
Is having sex before marriage acceptable?	42	68	93	18	48	52
Is having sex with a person other than spouse acceptable?	38	23	35	03	12	13
Should SEX education be given in School/college?	14	59	89	19	67	56
Are school/college students at high risk of getting AIDS?	08	08	14	04	11	35
Can you get AIDS anyhow by using Barber's Razor?	13	65	69	09	19	34

HS = High school classes, Inter = Intermediate classes, Grad = Graduate classes

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