



A STUDY OF AWARENESS ABOUT HIV/AIDS AMONG TAXI AND AUTO DRIVERS

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: AIDS is an emerging socio-economic and medical problem of great magnitude having a world wide distribution. Among the global public health problems, AIDS becomes top the listed. **Aim:** The present study was aimed to find out the AIDS awareness level of the hire taxi and auto drivers. **Methods:** This observational study was conducted in auto and taxi drivers to access the basic knowledge of AIDS awareness using questionnaire prepared in Tamil language. **Results:** 8% of participants considered AIDS as a hereditary disease, 72% were told were aware of the sexual mode of transmission. 18% were aware about spreading through used syringes. All respondents were aware that AIDS is not spread through contact with HIV infected person. But 32% of participants are not willing to touch HIV infected person. **Conclusion:** AIDS awareness is an unavoidable necessity for each and every individual in the society.

KEYWORDS : HIV, AIDS, Awareness

Introduction

AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) is one of the most devastating dilemmas before today's human race round the globe. It is one of the most critical pandemic spreading worldwide. In spite of great efforts made by several agencies, the disease is still not under sufficient control. The disease has no cure except higher degree of awareness and proactive measures to avert it. It is in itself not a particular name of any disease; rather it is the complex and larger level failure of immune system of infected people. The progressively weakening immune system in it renders fatal vulnerability towards a broader spectrum of health hazards leading ultimately to premature death. No panacea has so far been invented to treat it absolutely.

At the beginning of 1986, India had no reported cases of HIV/AIDS.. The first case of HIV was diagnosed among sex workers in Chennai, Tamil Nadu and it was noted that contact with foreign visitors had played a role in initial infections. Since then HIV has spread extensively throughout the country. In 1990 there had been tens of thousands of people living with HIV in India; by 2000 this had risen to millions.

Educating people about HIV/AIDS and how it can be prevented is complicated in India, due to number of factors like poverty, lack of information and communication awareness in people, religious mythology, socio-economic status etc. This means that although some HIV/AIDS prevention and information with education had taken place, it is far from facing and creating a combative effort to eradicate or reduce the pandemic.

Aim

The present study was aimed to find out the AIDS awareness level of the taxi and auto drivers.

Materials and methods

This observational study was conducted in auto and taxi drivers to access the knowledge of AIDS awareness using questionnaire prepared in Tamil language. These questions were used to access the basic knowledge of AIDS awareness. Data were collected and analyzed using Microsoft Office Excel.

Results

Totally 32 male drivers were questioned, age of the participants were from 26 years to 48 years. They are full time drivers working more than 12 hours daily in season time. 70% of the participants were completed secondary school, 18% were completed higher

secondary school and 12% were completed college.

What is AIDS?

8% of participants considered AIDS as a hereditary disease, 72% were told were aware of the sexual mode of transmission. 18% were aware about spreading through used syringes.

Does AIDS spread through contact?

All respondents were aware that AIDS is not spread through contact with HIV infected person. But 32% of participants are not willing to touch HIV infected person.

Is there a treatment for AIDS?

56% of participants aware that AIDS is not curable. 28% of participants were feeling that AIDS can be treated using costly medicine. 16% not aware about AIDS treatment

Do you ask for a change of blade at a barber's shop?

60% do not know the risk of the barber's blade change.

Discussion

HIV/AIDS continues to affect the lives of many people even today. Most times, more than AIDS itself, people suffer from the stigma and social stereotyping associated with it, and as a result, end up in depression, or even take extreme steps. World AIDS Day is celebrated annually on December 1 to spread awareness and generate compassion among people towards those affected, so they don't face ostracism, for no fault of their own. With time, more and more people who have tested positive for HIV, understand they can live normal lives just like the others and most importantly, that testing positive doesn't mean AIDS itself. Tamil Nadu saw one of the largest drops in condoms usage as it dropped from 2.3% to 0.8% of the population while Bihar also saw it fall from 2.3% to just 1%. Only West Bengal and Sikkim recorded a rise in condom usage by more than 1% over the previous survey while all other states either declined or recorded a marginal increase.

The recent National AIDS Control Policy of the Government of India aims at preventing the spread of AIDS by making people aware of its implications and providing them with the necessary tools for protecting themselves. The family health awareness campaign is a remarkable effort to reach the community but the momentum has to be sustained. A large section of society is poor and still lacks basic knowledge about AIDS, its spread and prevention.

Conclusion

Overall there is lack of knowledge about AIDS awareness in auto and taxi drivers. Some vital information like use of condoms,

transmission of HIV through body contact must be known by public. The better awareness of AIDS can be attributed by a large number of activities in public.

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