



KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDE ABOUT HIV/AIDS INFECTION AMONG HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS AT GOVERNMENT GENERAL HOSPITAL, ANANTAPURAMU.

Dermatology

Shreenivas Shouri	Associate Professor, Hospital Administration, Acsr Government Medical College, Nellore.
R. Suchitra*	Associate Professor, Obstetrics & Gynecology, Government General Hospital, Anantapuramu. *Corresponding Author
P. Sreenivasulu Naik	Associate Professor, Department Of Dvl, Government General Hospital, Anantapuramu.

ABSTRACT

Aim And Objective : To assess the knowledge and attitudes of health care providers towards patients suffering with AIDS / HIV. To determine if they felt adequately prepared to deal with medical and psychological aspects of AIDS /HIV.

Methodology : The study was conducted in questionnaire based pattern at Government General Hospital, Ananthapuramu, including nursing staff, lab technicians, ward boys, etc. A structured questionnaire was distributed to all the health care providers before and after an awareness program regarding the HIV/AIDS. The questionnaires regarding knowledge were focused on various methods of transmissions, high risk behaviours and preventive measures. Attitude towards HIV/AIDS patients, sexual behaviours, sex education and resource allocation for HIV/AIDS patients were assured.

Results: A change in the knowledge before and after the awareness program was seen in the following aspects: knowledge regarding vertical transmission (78% to 93.3 %) transmission through Breast feeding (31.9% to 85.3%) tuberculosis as the most common opportunistic infection in HIV/AIDS (26.9% to 70%) correct time of initiation of PEP (5% to 46.7%) facility for getting HIV test done confidentially (0.6% to 42.7%) an increasing trend in the positive attitude towards HIV patients was seen when it came to surgical treatment to HIV patient (40% to 56%) and an increasing trend in the favourable response towards HIV patients were seen from when it came to their opinion whether HIV patients can be kept in General Ward (57.5% to 78%).

Conclusion : From the above study we conclude that knowledge level on HIV/AIDS improved after the awareness program. This survey improved knowledge and attitude regarding HIV/ AIDS among health care providers.

KEYWORDS

INTRODUCTION

Sexually transmitted infections have long been recognized as one of the major health problems. (Da Ilabetta GA, n.d.). Many STI'S are easy to treat in initial stages. Knowledge about STI'S is very low even in communities where there is high prevalence. (Voeten HA, 2004:31) (STD, n.d.). HIV/AIDS is a major public health challenge with an estimate 23.49 lakh persons living with HIV in India in 2019. (htt1) On the Asia-pacific region, an estimated 5.9 million people were living with HIV in 2018.(htt2) Health education, particularly Information Education & Communication (IEC) and attitude and knowledge about the disease is the key strategies for controlling this epidemic. In the light of evidence that HIV/AIDS cases are continuously increasing in the developing countries like India, healthcare professionals are required to be adequately trained, so that they can play a pivotal role in controlling this pandemic. Even though it is widely accepted that health care professionals play a crucial role in prevention and control of HIV/AIDS, less attention has been giving to assess knowledge and attitude of the healthcare professionals. Few studies have reported stigma & discrimination by healthcare professionals while treating HIV- positive patients. Results of the study revealed that about one in eight people living with HIV/AIDS were denied treatment (UNDP, 2016).

Similarly, lack of knowledge about transmission of HIV was observed among the healthcare professionals working in government hospitals in India. That study had identified serious knowledge gaps among medical persons leading to refusal of treatment to persons living with HIV. (Maimaiti, 2010:2) There are reports of reluctance by dentists in treating patients, including refusal to treat. (Basavayya BN, 2005:49) In another study, dentists reported fear of getting infected, non-cooperation of support staff and perceived-lack of clinical skills as barriers to treating HIV positives. (Benora S.K., 1992:17) A study on MBBS students has shown certain misconceptions among them such as urine is being potential source of infection. About 90%students stressed for HIV testing for patients before admission, 60% were not willing for mouth-to-mouth resuscitation and 40% were unwilling to assist in surgical procedures on HIV/AIDS patients. (Mohsin S, 2010:1(2)) Students from medical, dental and allied health professions are to be sensitized on the knowledge pertaining to HIV/AIDS transmission and prevention, It is also necessary that these future healthcare workers should inculcate healthy attitudes towards persons

living with HIV/AIDS. However, there are limited studies which have explored knowledge and attitudes of healthcare students pertaining to HIV/AIDS, particularly in the eastern part of India. Keeping this in view, a study was conducted to assess the knowledge & attitudes related to HIV/AIDS among medical and allied health sciences students.

METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted in a questionnaire-based study pattern among the health care providers at Government General Hospital, Anantapuram. Prior approval from the institutional ethical committee was obtained. All the participants accepting for informed consent were included. The participants were instructed not to mention their personal details and were assured that strict confidentiality would be maintained. The questionnaire was given before and after an awareness program about medical and health and social aspects of HIV/AIDS. The questionnaire consisted of two parts; one was to ascertain their knowledge and the second to know their attitude towards HIV/AIDS. The questionnaire consisted of questions with true or false options (or yes / no questions). The responses were analyzed appropriately.

RESULTS

A total of 500 health care providers were included in the study, 250 nursing staff, 94 MNO/FNO and 156 lab technicians. A change in the knowledge and attitude between before and after the awareness program was seen in the following aspects: Knowledge reading vertical transmission (78% to 93.3%), transmission through Breast feeding (31.9% to 85.3%), tuberculosis as the most common opportunistic infection in HIV/AIDS (26% to 70%), correct time of initiation of post exposure prophylaxis (5% to 46.7%), facility for getting HIV test done confidentially (0.6% to 42.7%).

Table: Responses Of The Participants Before And After The Awareness Program About Knowledge Towards HIV/AIDS Patients

Questions	Before the awareness program		After the awareness program	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Is HIV transmitted by close contact like handshake or hugging	54 %	46 %	4 %	96 %

Is HIV transmitted by kissing	62 %	38 %	5 %	95 %
Is HIV transmitted by sharing syringes with drug users	71 %	29 %	98 %	2 %
Is HIV transmitted by sexual relations without protection	84 %	16 %	100 %	0
Can a person infected with HIV live without symptoms for many years	26 %	74 %	92 %	8 %
Can latex gloves provide protection from accidental exposure	38 %	62 %	90 %	10 %
Can HIV transmit from mother to fetus in utero	78 %	22 %	93.3 %	6.7 %
Can HIV transmit from mother to baby during delivery	78 %	22 %	93.3%	6.7 %
Can HIV transmit from mother to baby during breast-feeding	31.9 %	68.1 %	85.3 %	14.7 %
Can HIV transmit through a mosquito bite	56 %	44 %	85 %	15 %
Is TB common opportunistic infection	26 %	74 %	70 %	30 %

Table: Responses Of The Participants Before And After The Awareness Program About Attitude Towards HIV/AIDS Patients

Questions	Before the awareness program		After the awareness program	
	Yes %	No %	Yes %	No %
Will you take vital signs	32 %	68 %	76 %	24 %
Will you carry out physical examination	26 %	74 %	66 %	34 %
Will you give an injection/infusion/blood testing	25 %	75 %	72 %	28 %
Will you perform radiological diagnostic procedures	38 %	62 %	77 %	23 %
Will you perform first aid/dressing/suturing	20 %	80 %	68 %	32 %
Will you maintain confidentiality of patients on ART	0.6 %	99.4 %	46.7 %	53.3 %
What is opinion of you, keeping patients in general ward	57.5 %	42.5 %	78 %	22 %

An increasing trend in the positive attitude towards HIV patients was seen after conducting the awareness program (40% to 76%). An increasing trend in the favourable response towards HIV patients were seen when it came to their opinion whether HIV patients can be kept in general ward (57.5 % to 78%).

DISCUSSION

This study focuses on the health care providers including nursing staff, lab technicians, ward boys, etc. about the knowledge and attitudes of this population play a major role in the health care system of a country as they are responsible for imparting their service and educating the public regarding HIV/AIDS information, modes of disease transmission, high risk sexual behaviours as well as effective preventive measures. In this study, all the respondents recognized the major routes of transmission of HIV/AIDS infection such as transfusion of infected blood and blood products, unprotected sexual intercourse with an infected person.

The great majority also knew that HIV is not transmitted by sharing utensils, close physical contact like hugging, handshaking and contact through saliva or sweat. Media has always played strong role in raising basic awareness on various health issues including HIV/AIDS. Regarding precautionary measures, the overall knowledge of all the participants was found very low, more than 50% of the participants are unaware of the fact that latex gloves could provide protection against

accidental exposure to HIV infection. Because of this knowledge gap, healthcare providers might refrain from using protective measures while handling HIV cases and they may also avoid treating HIV patient.

A study by J Jaoko showed that nearly 81% of health care providers were willing to provide their services to the HIV/AIDS positive patients. This study also noted that those with previous work experience were more likely to have positive attitude. (Jaoko)

M.Marranzano conducted a study in staff nurses regarding knowledge, attitude and practices towards HIV/AIDS patients found that although HIV is nurses' main concern in regard to contracting infections in the workplace (54%), the vast majority of them (98%) has never refused an HIV/AIDS patient care assignment. (M. Marranzano, 2013)

Further, study by Dorothy SerwaaBoakye on nurses' attitude found majority have favorable attitude and also practice universal precautions satisfactorily. (Serwaa B.D, 2019:11)

Another study by Álvarez-Serrano MA and et.al. showed that the students' attitudes toward people with HIV/AIDS were relatively positive, with a total mean EASE value of 85.25 ± 9.80 . (Alvarez-Serrano MA, 2020:17(22))

The results of our study has shown that the knowledge and attitude of the health care providers has a negative impact while coming to the HIV/AIDS patients care. This negative approach has to be changed for the better care of the patients; which has to be achieved through awareness programs for the health care providers. This study highlights the importance of awareness programs, adequate knowledge and positive attitude for the health care providers towards the HIV/AIDS patients; which ultimately improves the health care scenario in the society and to ward off the stigma associated with it.

CONCLUSION

The overall knowledge among the health care providers was good, few minorities of them held some misconceptions. There is a strong need for motivation of HIV related education among them so as to remove misconceptions. Another Area that needs to be addressed is the attitude and behavior of health care providers towards people living with HIV. There is a need to create an environment that is conducive to the development of appropriate attitude of health care providers towards HIV. Future such studies must be conducted involving all branches of health care; so as to prepare health care providers to handle HIV/AIDS patients better and also contribute to health education in society.

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