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### KNOWLEDGE ATTITUDE AND PRACTICES REGARDING PREVENTION OF HIV/AIDS AMONGST SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN LUCKNOW

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#### Abstract

**Introduction:** AIDS is a major emerging public health problem in India. According to an estimate by WHO for Southeast Asia, India accounts for over two-thirds of all human immunodeficiency virus infected individuals in the region. 35% of all reported AIDS cases are among the age group of 15-24 years, indicating the vulnerability of the younger population to the epidemic. The study was conducted to assess the current level of knowledge, attitude and practices about prevention of HIV/AIDS among school students in Lucknow District and to suggest measures to prevent HIV/AIDS. **Materials and Methods:** This cross sectional study was conducted among students of 10<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> standard of Lucknow, India over a period from July to October 2011. Both boys and girls were enrolled for the study that were present at the time of data collection. **Results:** A total of 215 students were studied out of which 113 were boys and 102 were girls. Majority of the students, both girls (78%) and boys (82%) knew that avoiding sex with a prostitute is the best way to prevent HIV/AIDS. Majority agreed that it can be prevented from condoms (82.3% girls, 85.8% boys), by avoiding sex with prostitutes (68.6% girls, 69% boys) and by unuse of untested blood (54.9 % girls, &73.4% boys). Nearly 36% of girls and 43% of boys thought that it is a curable disease. **Conclusion:** The awareness about methods of prevention of HIV/AIDS was low. Although the students have favourable attitude towards persons infected with HIV/AIDS they were not aware of the fact that it is not a curable disease. The school authorities and the other concerned should come forward to design awareness campaigns for the benefit of the students so as to help them develop proper understanding of HIV/AIDS, its spread and prevention.

**Key words:** HIV, AIDS, school students, knowledge, attitude, prevention

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#### Introduction:

The acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) is a major emerging public health problem in India. According to an estimate made by the regional office of the World Health Organization (WHO) <sup>1</sup> for Southeast Asia, India accounts for over two-thirds of all human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)-infected individuals in the region. The projections of the WHO indicate that by AD 2010, half of the

AIDS patients in the world will be from India. The total annual economic loss due to HIV/AIDS in India is estimated to be Rs 3447 billion<sup>2</sup>. Sexually active youth have been identified as a group at high risk of HIV infection.<sup>3,4</sup> HIV has rapidly established itself throughout the world over the past three decades. The youth cohort is one of the most vulnerable groups as far as risk of HIV/AIDS is concerned. Globally, almost of a quarter of people

living with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) are under the age of 25 years<sup>5</sup>. In India, 35% of all reported AIDS cases are among the age group of 15-24 years, indicating the vulnerability of the younger population to the epidemic<sup>6</sup>. There is substantial evidence that sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) enhance the transmission and acquisition of HIV infection, and that control of STDs is helpful in preventing HIV/AIDS<sup>7</sup>. To stop the spread of HIV/AIDS in India, the Tenth Five Year Plan (2002-2007) was developed with targets set to achieve 90% coverage of schools and colleges through education programmes and 80% awareness among the general population in rural areas<sup>8</sup>. With this background, the present study was conducted to assess the current level of knowledge, attitude and practices about prevention of HIV/AIDS among school students in Lucknow District and to suggest measures to prevent HIV/AIDS.

#### **Material and methods:**

Study Design: Cross sectional study

Study Population: Students of 10<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> standard.

Study Area: Intermediate schools of Lucknow District.

Study Period: July 2011- October 2011

Sample Size: A total of 215 students both boys and girls were enrolled for the study who were present at the time of data collection.

Inclusion criteria: Students studying in class 10<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> after taking verbal consent.

Exclusion Criteria: Students studying in classes<sup>9</sup> up to 9<sup>th</sup> and who were not willing to participate.

Sampling Technique: The present study was conducted during July 2011 – Oct 2011, over a period of four months in two randomly selected co-educational schools of Lucknow District, UP, The two schools were selected by random sampling technique from the list of schools in Lucknow. This study was conducted after the ethical clearance from the ethical committee of Era's Lucknow Medical College, Lucknow.

Tools of data collection: The investigating tool so used is preformed, pretested questionnaire. This had

both open and close-ended questions related to various aspects of HIV/AIDS. Written consent was obtained from the school principals after explaining the purpose of the study to them the entire questionnaire was explained to the sample students and all the queries raised by them were clarified. Care was taken to minimize consultation amongst the school children. Different factors related to HIV/AIDS and information was gathered. Subjects were assessed for awareness of various HIV/AIDS & associated risk factors. It was subsequently followed by a open discussion on HIV/AIDS with the students. During discussion, misconceptions and apprehensions regarding HIV/AIDS were clarified.

Data Analysis: Data were collected, compiled and tabulated using Microsoft Excel and analysed using SPSS 17.0 version.

#### **Results:**

A total of 215 students were studied out of which 113 were boys and 102 were girls. Majority of the students, both girls (78%) and boys (82%) told that avoiding sex with prostitute is the best way to prevent HIV/AIDS followed by being faithful to the uninfected partner among girls (72%) and boys (87%) and avoiding sharing razors and blades among both girls (72%) and boys (75%), (Table 1). When Attitude of the Student towards preventive measures of HIV/AIDS was observed, majority of the students agreed that it can be prevented from condoms (84 girls, 97 boys), by avoiding sex with prostitutes (70 girls, 78 boys) and by avoiding untested blood (56 girls, 83 boys), (Table 2).

When asked about attitude of the students towards persons infected with HIV/AIDS, 49% of the girls and 45% of boys, had sympathy to them and 36% of girls and 38% boys behaved normally with them. Only one girl and 13 boys were with attitude that they hate them (Table 3).

About 36% of girls and 43% of boys thought that HIV/AIDS is a curable disease Similar percentage of girls (21%) and boys (20%) were not aware of the fact whether it is curable or not. Majority of the students (71% girls and 60% boys) told that it can be treated by qualified doctors, (Table 4).

Table 1: Knowledge of students about preventive measures of HIV/AIDS

Preventive Measures	Girls(102)		Boys(113)		Total(215)	
	No.	%	No.	%	No	%
Protected sex with condom	54	52.94	52	46.02	106	49.30
Abstain from sex	38	37.25	49	43.36	87	40.47
Be faithful to uninfected partner	74	72.55	98	86.73	172	80.00
Avoid sex with prostitute	80	78.43	93	82.30	173	80.47
Avoid sex with person having multiple partners	71	69.61	84	74.34	155	72.09
Avoid sex with homosexuals	48	47.06	60	53.10	108	50.23
Avoid sex with IV drug users	54	52.94	63	55.75	117	54.42
Avoid sharing razors and blades	74	72.55	85	75.22	159	73.95
Avoid mosquito bites	35	34.31	64	56.64	99	46.05
Avoid kissing	25	24.51	45	39.82	70	32.56
Avoid sex with younger girls	28	27.45	45	39.82	73	33.95
Avoid sweat/ saliva/ breast milk of someone infected	54	52.94	62	54.87	116	53.95
Avoid untested Blood	68	66.67	84	74.34	152	70.70

Table 2: Attitude of students towards prevention of HIV/AIDS

HIV/AIDS prevention	Girls(102)		Boys(113)		Total(215)	
	Agree No.(%)	Disagree No.(%)	Agree No.(%)	Disagree No.(%)	Agree No.(%)	Disagree No.(%)
Use of condoms	84(82.3)	17(16.7)	97(85.8)	15(13.2)	181(84.1)	32(14.9)
Avoid sex with prostitute	70(68.6)	9(8.8)	78(69.0)	16(14.1)	148(68.8)	25(11.6)
Avoid untested blood	56(54.9)	34(33.3)	83(73.4)	24(21.2)	139(64.6)	58(26.9)

Table 3: Attitude towards persons infected with HIV/AIDS

Attitude	Girls(102)		Boys(113)		Total(215)	
	No	%	No	%	No	%
Hate them	1	0.98	13	11.50	14	6.51
Think it is the curse	10	9.80	2	1.77	12	5.58
Have sympathy	50	49.02	51	45.13	101	46.98
Behave normally with them	37	36.27	44	38.94	81	37.67
Don't Know	4	3.92	3	2.65	7	3.26

Table 4: Knowledge of students about treatment of HIV/AIDS

HIV/AIDS is curable	Girls (102)		Boys(113)		Total(215)	
	No	%	No	%	No	%
Yes	37	36.27	49	43.36	86	40.00
No	43	42.16	41	36.28	84	39.07
Don't Know	22	21.57	23	20.35	45	20.93
Persons who can treat HIV/AIDS						
Quacks	5	4.90	15	13.27	20	9.30
RMP	8	7.84	3	2.65	11	5.12
Qualified Doctors	73	71.57	68	60.18	141	65.58

### Discussion:

The finding of the present study was satisfactory and consistent with previous research findings. In present study majority of the students both girls (78%) and boys (82%) have knowledge about preventive measures of HIV/AIDS i.e., avoiding sex with prostitute followed by being faithful to the partner (72% girls and 87% boys) students were less aware of condom use as a preventive measure of the disease In preset study. Similarly in a study by Yadav et al (2011) youth displayed less awareness of prevention methods in comparison to awareness of transmission modes of the disease. Similar findings were also observed in other studies conducted across the country without regional variation<sup>10,11,12</sup>. Again, awareness of different preventive measures was variable. The study found that young people were less aware of condom use as a prevention strategy than another strategy. The observation highlights the high level of ignorance about this important preventive measure in the sexually active young population. In present study majority of the students believe that HIV/AIDS can be prevented by avoiding sex with prostitutes by using condoms and avoiding untested blood. In present study about half of the students have with the attitude of sympathy towards persons infected with HIV/AIDS followed by behaving normally with them. We noted that students' attitudes towards persons infected with HIV/ AIDS were intermingled with their concepts of sexual morality. A majority of the students were sympathetic towards AIDS patients and were against isolating AIDS patients from society. Similar finding were also observed by Yadav et al (2011)<sup>9</sup>. In a study by Srivastava et al in Bareilly District, the awareness regarding methods of prevention of HIV/AIDS was also significantly higher (P<.001) among boys as compared to girls.<sup>13</sup> Only 19.1% girls and 59.5% boys had knowledge about condoms as means of protection while 12.0% girls and 47.5% boys stated that HIV/AIDS can be prevented by having a single sexual partner<sup>13</sup>. Other investigators have reported that the consistent presentation of the same public health messages is an effective method for promoting a favourable attitude towards HIV/AIDS. This could be an important lesson to follow for developing countries

to promote favourable attitudes towards HIV/AIDS. In present study about 36% of the girls and 43% of boys were believe that it is a curable disease and it can be treated by qualified doctors. Similarly in a study by Singh et al (2012)<sup>14</sup> while responding about availability of cure of HIV/AIDS in rural areas 11.61% women told that cure is available for the disease. The response was same by 32.58% women of urban areas about availability of cure for the disease. These study results can be useful in directing future efforts at creating awareness about HIV/AIDS. Our study explored one of the important measures to prevent HIV/AIDS, i.e., awareness of the disease.

### **Conclusion:**

From the findings of the present study it was concluded that awareness about methods of prevention of HIV/AIDS was low. Although the students have favourable attitude toward persons infected with HIV/AIDS they are not aware the fact that is not curable disease. Besides, the school authorities and the other concerned should come forward to design awareness campaigns for the benefit of the students so as to help them develop proper understanding of what HIV/AIDS is, how does it spread? and how to prevent it? The source of information should also be strengthened by all the agencies and organizations of the region to spread the knowledge and awareness about HIV/AIDS.

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