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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Knowledge About AIDS Among Medical Students In Iran

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ABSTRACT

Young people are among the high risk group who are susceptible to sexually transmitted diseases. Several educational programs are scheduled to raise awareness about risky behaviours and to decrease the rate of the HIV pandemic. This cross sectional study showed that in young medical students, the level of awareness about HIV/AIDS increased during the years of academic education (not significant) and that males have a higher level of awareness than females. Higher awareness is desirable in this group due to their key role in the community.

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Background

Young people, especially those aged more than 18-years-old, are categorized as the high risk group for sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) like HIV/AIDS; due to the unavoidable desire of young ages to experience unprotected sex [1],[2].

The pandemic of HIV/AIDS has been in the center of global concern for about the past 25 years[3]. The high prevalence of HIV infected population in Africa and some examples of success in terms of HIV awareness and behavioural changes towards sex in countries such as Uganda have resulted in the paying of special attention to assessing awareness and attitude in other populations for planning further interaction towards risky behaviours [3].

Materials And Methods

In the present study, we conducted a survey on 209 medical students in Golestan Medical University in the northeast of Iran.

[Table/Fig 1] Trained interviewers were from the same study group, asked questions about demographic data and assessed the knowledge of medical students regarding AIDS and 14 other questions. The interviewee's answers were kept confidential.

After coding the data and entering it into SPSS-15 software, the χ^2 test was used to test the significance among the group. P-values less than 0.05 were considered to be significant.

[Table/Fig 1] Questionnaire

- Code:.....
 - Sex: Male female
 - Education level:.....
- 1- What is the meaning of AIDS?
 - a- Acquired Immune-deficiency syndrome
 - b- Congenital Immune-deficiency syndrome
 - c- Syndrome induced by AIDS virus
 - d- Abbreviation of the name of disease discoverers
 - 2- What are the two most common type of HIV dissemination in Iran?
 - a- IV drug usage- Sexual
 - b- Blood and its products- Sexual
 - c- IV drug usage- Mother born- Barbers- Soil
 - d- IV drug usage- Sharp devices- Nail and blades
 - 3- How long is the windows period in HIV?
 - a- 5-20 years
 - b- 2 wks-16 months
 - c- > 4 yrs
 - d- < 1 wks
 - 4- Which is not the method of HIV transmission?
 - a- Riding with infected person in a bus or taxi
 - b- Kissing and shaking hands
 - c- Swimming in a public pool
 - d- Public resting room
 - 5- Which needed medical prophylaxis?
 - a- suspected sexual contacts
 - b- Suspected needle stick
 - c- both of them
 - d- None
 - 6- What is the body reaction against viral induction?
 - a- Antigen production
 - b- Antibody secretion
 - c- Decreasing lymphocytes
 - d- B and C
 - 7- Which cells are attacked most by HIV?
 - a- Red blood cells
 - b- Central nerve system cells
 - c- White blood cells
 - d- Genital mucco-cutaneous tissue
 - 8- A young 25 years-old male comes with a history of scratch and bleeding from a skin wound induced during barbering. Barber disinfects the blade with 70% alcohol.
 - a- The percent of alcohol is low; it should be > 96% to preventing AIDS.
 - b- He should be referred to specialist and give test.
 - c- AIDS virus can be removed in non-vital environment and is sterile by alcohol.
 - d- He should be tested after the windows period.
 - 9- What should we do to not be infected?
 - a- performing personal hygiene
 - b- not addicting
 - c- ethical consideration
 - d- All
 - 10- How many infected person are there in Iran and in the world, respectively?
 - a- 15 million- 35 million
 - b- 1 million- 40 million
 - c- 11 million- 40 million
 - d- 10 million- 35 million
 - 11- Which is classified as high risk group?
 - a- Hemophilia
 - b- IVDU
 - c- Organ transplantation
 - 12- Which is associated with higher risk of HIV?
 - a- IVDU
 - b- Recurrent dialysis
 - c- Multi-partner
 - d- All
 - 13- Which is the most essential method to prevent AIDS?
 - a- Determine transmitting and preventing methods
 - b- Socio-economic restricting of patients
 - c- Wide advertising against patients and disease
 - d- All
 - 14- What should we do if not sure to the health of sex partner?
 - a- Condom
 - b- OCP
 - c- Vaccination
 - d- Anti-viral drug before each intercourse

Results

There were 97 males and 112 females in the survey. The mean level of awareness was higher in male students (not significant). The level of awareness kept increasing with the increase in the years of academic education (not significant).

A desirable level of knowledge about AIDS was seen in 51.5% of females and 55.7% of males.

Generally, the knowledge level was low in 14%, moderate in 33% and good in 54% of the medical students.

Discussion

In conclusion, the results showed that the mean level of knowledge about AIDS is ranked at an almost acceptable level in these medical students and represented that the progress in academic medical education plays an important role in this process. This effect was also seen in some other studies[3],[4].

But, as the medical students are expected to be the key leaders of preventive and educational programs in the next coming generation of the community and with regards to their important role in controlling this epidemic, it seems that a higher level of knowledge should be achieved in the academic years of this population.

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