*Himachal Journal of Agricultural Research 36 (1): 92-94, 2010*

# Knowledge of adolescent girls regarding AIDS after educational intervention

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**Abstract**

**The present study was undertaken to provide educational intervention to adolescent girls regarding AIDS (Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome). A pretest-posttest research design was used. A total sample of 112 school going girls (14-18 years) were selected from five villages. Pretest and posttest was conducted on the total sample. The tool consisted of a self-structured schedule covering various aspects on AIDS and its transmission. The sample was first tested regarding their knowledge on AIDS and its transmission. Intervention consisted of educating girls for the period of six months. All the girls were post tested. Increase in the knowledge level of girls was observed regarding AIDS and its transmission.**

**Key words:** Knowledge, intervention, AIDS, adolescent girls.

## Introduction

Adolescence literally means to grow in maturity. It refers to the period when an individual has attained reproductive maturity but is still to grow into the physical, mental, emotional and social maturity, necessary to fit in the adult world. It is characterized by rapid physical growth and development, social, sexual and psychological changes. During this period the potentialities are realized, abilities, skills habits, and attitudes are formed. It involves several kinds of high risk behaviour like drug-abuse, pre-marital sexual activity, and increased risk of contacting HIV/AIDS.

The AIDS epidemic represents the most serious public health problem in India. There is no denial of the enormity of the problem. The prevalence in all parts of the country highlights the spread from urban to rural area and from high risk to general population. It is estimated that as on mid 1998, 3.5 million Indians were infected with the virus. Migration of labour, low literacy levels leads to low awareness, gender disparities, prevalence of sexually transmitted diseases and reproductive tract infections are some of the factors attributed to AIDS. The United Nations State of World Population 2003 brings out the alarming fact that a youth is infected with HIV every second and increasingly women account for nearly half of new cases of HIV infections worldwide. In India 40 per cent of the cases of full-blown AIDS fall in the age group of 15 to 29 years.

Poor knowledge on part of adolescent girls can lead to disasters. Young girls should know and understand about AIDS and how it spreads before they are sexually active. Young girls who have learnt about AIDS can become important teachers in their own families. Therefore providing timely education in the form of intervention to the girls could fill these gaps in knowledge. With this objective in mind the study aimed at providing educational intervention to adolescent girls regarding AIDS and its transmission. In our culture it is always easy to inform about the risk of getting AIDS through blood transfusion or the risk of pregnancy. It is very difficult to teach about the sexual spread as sexuality is something not talked about in most societies. Sexual spread is the most common mode of transmission and we know that education can bring about many changes in people, more appropriately in case of girls, who would turn out to become wife and mothers in future.

## Methodology

The study adopted a pretest-posttest research design with a specific period of intervention. A total sample of 112 girls belonging to the age group of 14-18 years was selected from two blocks i.e. Panchrukhi and Bhawarna of district Kangra of H.P. A total of five villages were selected from blocks, two villages i.e. Paruar and Bhawarna from Bhawarna block and three villages i.e. Tatehal, Banuri and Rajpur from Panchrukhi block. Senior secondary schools

were contacted to obtain the list of girls belonging to 14-18 years of age. Out of that list 112 girls were randomly selected. Hence from Bhawarna 54 girls and from Panchrukhi 58 girls were selected thus making a total of 112 girls. Pretesting was done on 112 girls regarding their knowledge on AIDS and STDs (Sexually Transmitted Diseases) and how they are transmitted. The tools consisted of a self-structured questionnaire schedule consisting of aspects of AIDS and its causes. The intervention consisted of educating all 112 girls. An intervention programme was developed which aimed at providing adolescent girls with scientific education regarding AIDS, its causative factors, symptoms and its diagnosis. This kind of knowledge was given for a period of 6 months through various techniques of lectures, discussions, role plays, puppet shows etc. Girls were further post tested to see the effect of intervention on their knowledge.

**Results and Discussion**

HIV/AIDS is spreading fast among adolescents. No doubt this is a critical age group whose problems and needs are to be addressed by health system, families and communities. In order to minimize its spread, knowledge of this grave disease is a must. The knowledge of adolescent girls regarding AIDS/STDs is given in Table 1.

Table 1 reveals that, during pretesting (92.8%) adolescent girls had knowledge about AIDS. After providing intervention for 6 months, it was observed that the percentage of girls had shown an increase. However regarding knowledge of STDs none of the adolescent girls had any knowledge. After providing intervention (16.9%) girls gained knowledge related to STDs (Sexually Transmitted Diseases). A study conducted by Mahajan and Sharma (2005) revealed that the adolescent girls of Jammu (both rural as well urban areas) were found ignorant regarding AIDS.

Table 2 reveals the knowledge level of adolescent girls regarding transmission of AIDS. It can be seen from the table that in pretesting phase majority of adolescent girls (36.6%) thought that AIDS is transmitted through unsafe relations. Whereas (32.1%) reported that infected syringes acts as another transmitting agent of AIDS. After providing adolescent girls with educational intervention and conducting posttest, their was a slight shift towards other reasons like infected syringes and infected blood. On the other hand girls' knowledge level was found to increase towards reasons like donating infected blood and during delivery/ pregnancy. Umakanth and Allan (2004) revealed that 98.3 per cent of students said that HIV/AIDS spread by having unprotected sex with commercial sex worker and other partners. In a similar study Sultana (2004) reported that 85 per cent of the respondents were aware that the chance of getting HIV through blood transfusion was considered true. Of the respondents 83 per cent of them said that HIV can be acquired through syringes and needles. In the present study, right kind of education was given to girls through the intervention period of 6 months, their wrong beliefs were negated.

**Conclusions**

At the moment, the only effective weapon against the spread of AIDS is public education about the disease. That is why every person in every country should know how to avoid getting the AIDS virus. The risk of AIDS is not about who we are it's about what we do. The youth phase is considered the most sexually active phase. It should be made clear to the girls that, 'AIDS can be easily prevented, once contacted it can never be cured'.

**Table 1. Percentage distribution of adolescent girls regarding knowledge about AIDS / STDs in pre and post-test**

| S. No. | Total %age N=112 | | Village 1 n=18 | | Village 2 n=20 | | Village 3 n=34 | | Village 4 n=20 | | Village 5 n=20 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Pre test | Post test | Pre test | Post test | Pre test | Post test | Pre test | Post test | Pre test | Post test | Pre test | Post test |
| AIDS | 104 (92.8) | 112 (100) | 18 (100) | 18 (100) | 19 (95) | 20 (100) | 32 (94.1) | 34 (100) | 17 (85) | 20 (100) | 18 (90) | 20 (100) |
| STDs | 0 | 19 (16.9) | 0 | 1 (5.5) | 0 | 3 (15) | 0 | 5 (14.7) | 0 | 3 (15) | 0 | 3 (15) |

Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage

**Table 2. Percentage distribution of adolescent girls regarding knowledge of transmission of AIDS**

| S. No. | Total %age N=112 | | Village 1 n=18 | | Village 2 n=20 | | Village 3 n=34 | | Village 4 n=20 | | Village 5 n=20 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Pre test | Post test | Pre test | Post test | Pre test | Post test | Pre test | Post test | Pre test | Post test | Pre test | Post test |
| By touching | 2 (1.8) | - | - | - | - | - | 2 (5.8) | - | - | - | - | - |
| HIV virus | 5 (4.4) | - | - | - | - | - | | - | 2 (10) | - | 3 (15) | - |
| Infected syringes | 36 (32.1) | 88 (78.5) | 5 (27.7) | 11 (61.1) | 9 (45) | 19 (95) | 15 (44.1) | 20 (58.8) | 2 (10) | 19 (95) | 5 (25) | 19 (95) |
| Reusing syringes | 19 (7) | 29 (25.8) | 2 (11.1) | 3 (16.7) | 2 (10) | 1 (5) | 3 (8.8) | 5 (14.7) | 4 (20) | 10 (50) | 8 (40) | 10 (50) |
| Physical relations with infected person | 9 (8) | 20 (17.8) | 2 (11.1) | 4 (22.2) | 2 (10) | 4 (20) | 4 (11.7) | 5 (14.7) | - | 4 (20) | 1 (5) | 3 (15) |
| Unsafe relations | 41 (36.6) | 20 (17.8) | 7 (38.8) | 8 (44.4) | 6 (30) | 5 (25) | 11 (32.3) | 3 (8.8) | 7 (35) | - | 10 (50) | 4 (20) |
| Physical relations with more than one person | 25 (22.3) | 13 (11.6) | 5 (27.7) | 2 (11.1) | 5 (25) | 3 (15) | 9 (26.4) | 2 (5.8) | 1 (5) | 3 (15) | 5 (25) | 3 (15) |
| During breast-feeding | 3 (2.6) | 14 (12.5) | 2 (11.1) | 4 (22.2) | - | 2 (10) | - | 3 (8.8) | 1 (5) | 1 (5) | - | 4 (20) |
| During Delivery/pregnancy | - | 13 (11.6) | - | 3 (16.7) | - | 2 10% | - | 5 (14.7) | - | 2 (10) | - | 1 (5) |
| Touching infected blood | 1 (0.9) | - | 1 (5.6) | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Donating infected blood | 8 (7.1) | 22 (19.6) | 1 (5.6) | 3 (16.7) | - | 5 (25) | 6 (17.6) | 4 (11.7) | 1 (5) | 5 (25) | - | 4 (20) |

Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage

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