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The Knowledge and Attitude of Married women towards HIV/AIDS in an urban community of Belgaum City, Karnataka - A cross sectional study

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Abstract

Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) is a fatal illness caused by retrovirus known as the Human Immune Deficiency Virus (HIV). In 2011 it was estimated that 34.2 million adults worldwide were living with HIV/AIDS, among them 16.8 million were women. The present study assessed to know the knowledge and attitude regarding HIV/AIDS in married women of reproductive age group in an urban population of Belgaum city. This cross-sectional study was conducted among 400 married women of Ramnagar area of Belgaum city using simple random sampling methods. Each woman was interviewed for her level of knowledge & Attitude about HIV/AIDS. Percentage and Chi square test was used for analysis. It was found that 92.8% of women were aware about HIV/AIDS. Television (80.4%) was the main sources of information 91.5% of women said that HIV/AIDS spread by unprotected sex. 89.4% women knew that HIV/AIDS can be prevented by consistent use of condom. Majority of women had positive attitude towards people living with HIV/AIDS. The study showed that, majority of the women were aware about HIV/AIDS, but some of them did not know the other aspects of the disease like ICTC and PPTCT services.

Key words: AIDS, HIV, Married women

Introduction

Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) is a fatal illness caused by retrovirus known as the Human Immune Deficiency Virus (HIV). HIV is one of the world's leading infectious killer's, claiming more than 25 million lives over the past three decades. Globally, in 2012, there were 35.3 million people living with HIV. Since the start of the epidemic, an estimated 36 million people have died of AIDS-related illnesses.¹ Worldwide, women comprise 52% of all people living with HIV in low- and middle-income countries.² The total number of people living with HIV/AIDS in India is estimated to be 21 lakh in 2011. Children (<15 years) account for 7% of all infection, while 86% are in the age group of 15-49 years, of these 39% were among women.³ Karnataka is designated as one of the five "high prevalence state" in the country as far as HIV/AIDS is concerned.⁴ There are a number of factors - Biological, Socio-cultural and Economic which make women more vulnerable to HIV/AIDS. Women are twice as likely as men to contract HIV from a single act of unprotected sex. Women can play a very important role in the prevention of HIV, having knowledge about HIV/AIDS, especially married women will help them in protecting themselves and their children against it. Hence the present study was conducted in order to assess the knowledge and attitude of these married women.

Methodology

The present study was undertaken in Ramnagar urban health center area, which is an urban field practice area of J.N. Medical College Belgaum, which has a population of 29,521 and comprises of 4,427 eligible couples. By taking the prevalence of knowledge of HIV/AIDS among married women as 57% (NFHS-3), 5% absolute error, ($n=4pq/d^2$) the sample size required is 400. All the 4,427 married women who are permanent residents of urban health center area, Ramnagar were numbered and 400 married women in the reproductive age group of 18-49 years were included in the study by simple random sampling method. After conducting a pilot study, the present study was undertaken for a period of nine months from January 2013 to September 2013. Ethical clearance was obtained from IRB and informed consent was obtained from the study participants. Information on socio demographic variables and awareness of HIV/AIDS was collected. A pre-designed and pre-tested questionnaire was used to collect data. Data was analyzed by SPSS software version 20 using percentages and Chi-Square test was applied to find out the association between knowledge of HIV/AIDS and various demographic variables.

Results

Socio-demographic profile:

Out of 400 married women, 239 (59.8%) women were between 19-29 years of age and only 6 (1.5%) were of less than 19 years. Majority (54.8%) of them were Muslim. In present study, 52 (13%) were illiterate and 156 (39%) had completed secondary education.

As far as their occupation was concerned, maximum number of women 374(93.5%) were housewives, whereas only 15(3.8%) were engaged either in private services or government job.

In view of educational status of their husband, majority 131(32.7%) of them had completed primary education followed by secondary education 123(30.7%), 72(18%) had completed PUC/Diploma, 45(11.3%) illiterates while 29(7.3%) were graduates. Maximum number of husbands of married women were workers 153(38.3%) followed by private job holder 123(30.8%). Majority of married women belonged to class IV (41.3%) followed by Class V (28.5) according to modified B.G Prasad's classification. (Table 1)

Knowledge about HIV/AIDS & Sources of Information

In our study, 92.8% of the participants had heard about HIV/AIDS. Television (80.4%) was found to be the most prominent source of information followed by Anganwadi, ASHA or Health worker (33%) and Doctors (24.9%). (Table 2)

Modes of Transmission

91.5% of women knew that HIV/AIDS spreads by unprotected sex and 75.5% of them knew that it may be transmitted from mother to child, 8.7% of them had a misconception that HIV/AIDS spreads by sharing food, shaking hands and sharing of cloths. (Table 3) Awareness about STI/RTI was quite very low. Only 14.3% knew that pre-existing STI/RTI increase the chance of getting HIV.

Knowledge about Signs & Symptoms, Cure and Testing of HIV/AIDS

Knowledge about possible symptoms of HIV/AIDS was low (21%). 41% reported weight loss, 37.9% reported fever and 21% Chronic diarrhea as one of the signs and symptoms of HIV/AIDS. 38.8% were aware that HIV/AIDS was not curable. Majority (50%) of the women were willing to get tested for HIV/AIDS and 25% had already got tested. Only 67% of women were aware about free HIV testing done in government hospital.

Knowledge about Prevention of HIV/AIDS

89.4% women knew that HIV/AIDS can be prevented by use of condom. Testing the blood before transfusion (65.6%), using disposable sterilized syringes/needles (42.1%), avoiding sex with multiple sexual partners were the other modes of prevention of HIV/AIDS. 76.5% felt that mother to child transmission can be prevented by testing pregnant women for HIV.

Attitude regarding HIV/AIDS

87.8% of women had positive attitude towards people suffering from HIV/AIDS where as 66.8% of them were willing to work alongside a co-worker who is HIV positive. 67% of the women were willing to eat food prepared by worker who is HIV positive followed by 81% were willing to shake hands with people living with HIV/AIDS. 78.8% of women were ready to donate blood to a HIV positive person.

Knowledge regarding ICTC & PPTCT services

In our study, knowledge about ICTC (Integrated Counseling and Testing Center) and PPTCT (Prevention of Parent-to-Child Transmission of HIV) services was quite low, only 29.8% were aware about ICTC. 22.5% of the women were aware about PPTCT services.

Association between Knowledge regarding HIV/AIDS and socio-demographic variables

In our study, statistically significant association was found between knowledge of HIV/AIDS and age of married women ($\chi^2 = 6.316$, DF=2, P=0.043), educational status ($\chi^2=109.84$, DF=4, P=<0.001), socio-economic status ($\chi^2 = 30.340$, DF=3, P= 0.001), and Parity ($\chi^2= 11.020$, DF= 4, P= 0.026). No statistical significance was found between occupation of married women ($\chi^2 = 1.173$, DF= 1, P= 0.279) and knowledge of HIV/AIDS. A statistically significant association was found between knowledge of HIV/AIDS and educational status of husband ($\chi^2=32.173$, DF= 4, P <0.001), and Occupation of husband ($\chi^2= 13.369$, DF= 3 & P= 0.004).

Discussion

In the present study, out of total 400 married women surveyed, maximum number belong to younger group i.e. 19-29 years of age (59.8%). Similar finding was seen in a study conducted in South India where 51.8% of women were less than 30 years of age¹¹. In this study 39% had studied up to secondary, which is similar to another study conducted in Mumbai in which 39% had studied up to secondary level¹⁷.

Majority (93.5%) of the women in our study were housewives which is similar to another study conducted in Dehradun where 63% of the women were housewives²⁶.

The present study revealed that 92.8% of urban women were aware or heard about HIV/AIDS and the main sources of information were Television (80.4%) followed by Anganwadi, ASHA, & Health workers (33%). Similar to our study, awareness of HIV/AIDS among urban women of Punjab was 93.9%³² where as it was 96% in a study conducted in Pondicherry¹⁸. Main sources of information in another study conducted in Pondicherry¹⁸ were television (81.98%), radio (42.79%), majority of which are similar to our study.

In our study, 21% of women knew about signs and symptoms of HIV/AIDS, among them 41% quoted weight loss, 38% fever and 21% chronic diarrhea as one of the signs and symptoms of

HIV/AIDS. The finding of our study is similar to another study conducted in Khartoum²⁵ where 14.9% quoted fever, 16.3% continuous diarrhea and 72% loss of weight as one of the symptoms of HIV/AIDS. In a study conducted in Northern India⁹, it was observed that 44.7% of women were aware of maternal to child transmission.

According to a descriptive study conducted in Punjab, 74.7% knew that sexual route was a mode of transmission for AIDS, 78.8% knew that contaminated blood transfusion can result in HIV and awareness about STD's was quite low³². Only 12.4% knew that STDs increase the risk of HIV/AIDS transmission, which is similar to our study. In a study conducted in Nigeria, it was found that 51.4% women were aware about mother to child transmission and 4% of women felt that AIDS also spreads by mosquito bites²⁷.

Knowledge of women regarding cure of HIV/AIDS was found to be 31.8% in our study whereas study conducted in Mumbai¹⁷ it was 24.9% and in Pune 32%³⁰, which is similar to our study. Knowledge regarding prevention of HIV/AIDS among married women in our study was 84.5%, whereas in Mumbai 56% of women believed that AIDS could be prevented¹⁷. More than half of respondents (61.7%) in Iran thought HIV could be prevented by regular use of condoms and only 42.9% knew that avoiding sharing needles in drug abusers can prevent the AIDS transmission²⁹. A study conducted in Pune showed that only 7% of the respondents knew the use of condoms to prevent HIV infection³⁰, which is less in comparison to our study

In our study, 87.8% had positive attitude towards people suffering from HIV/AIDS where as a study conducted in Iran observed that only 36.7% of the women had positive attitude towards HIV positive people²⁹, which is less in comparison to our study. In our study, 50% of the women were willing to get tested for HIV/AIDS which is similar to a study conducted in Khartoum where 50% of women underwent testing on voluntary basis²⁵.

67.5% of the women in our study were willing to eat food prepared by HIV positive person where as in a study conducted in Khartoum, only 39% of women were willing to eat food prepared by HIV positive person, which is less in comparison to our study. In our study, 29.8% of women were aware about ICTC services and only 22.5% were aware about PPTCT services for HIV/AIDS where as a study conducted in Manipur, 58% of women were aware about PPTCT services³¹. However in our study, majority of them did not know about these facilities.

In our study, knowledge of AIDS was found to be significantly associated with age of married women which is similar to another study conducted in India which showed that women's age and AIDS knowledge were significantly associated²⁰. In Assam, it was found that, women education plays an important role in creating good concept of HIV/AIDS. It was showed that illiterate women were less likely to have knowledge than literate women¹⁶. In study a conducted in Northeast India, it was observed that wives of educated husband knew better about HIV/AIDS than wives of uneducated husbands¹⁵.

Conclusion

In our study, majority of the women were aware about HIV/AIDS, but some of them did not know the other aspects of the disease like ICTC and PPTCT services. Mass media like television had played a significant role in the awareness regarding HIV/AIDS in this area. This study also revealed that knowledge of HIV/AIDS in married women was significantly associated with the age, educational status, socio-economic status and parity.

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Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics of participants

(N=400)		Number (%age)
Age of the Participants	<19	6 (1.5)
	19-29	239 (59.7)
	30-39	114 (28.5)
	40-49	41 (10.3)
Religion of the Participants	Hindu	181 (45.3)
	Muslim	219 (54.7)
Educational status of Participants	Illiterate	52 (13)
	Primary	139 (34.7)
	Secondary	156 (39)
	PUC/Diploma	36 (9)
	Graduate	17 (4.3)
Occupation of Participants	Housewife	374 (93.4)
	Worker	11 (2.8)
	Private job	10 (2.5)
	Govt. job	05 (1.3)
Socio-economic Status of Participants	Class I	3 (0.8)
	Class II	27 (6.7)
	Class III	91 (22.7)
	Class IV	165 (41.3)
	Class V	114 (28.5)
	Total	400 (100)

Table 2: Sources of HIV/AIDS knowledge

Sources*	Number (% age)
Radio	21 (5.6%)
Television	300 (80.4%)
Print media	22 (5.9)
Work place	11 (2.9)
Friends	24 (6.4)
Doctors	93 (24.9)
Health worker	123 (33.0)
Relatives	26 (7.0)
*Multiple responses so total percentage does not correspond to 100	

Table 3: Knowledge about modes of spread of HIV/AIDS

Modes of spread*	Number (% age)
Spread by unprotected sex	325 (91.5)
Transfusion of untested blood	257 (72.4)
Sharing of infected needles	267 (75.2)
Transmission from mother to child	268 (75.5)
Sharing foods, shaking hands, sharing cloths	31 (8.7)
Mosquito bite	57 (16.1)
Houseflies	10(2.8)
*Multiple responses so total percentage does not correspond to 100	