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Title: Impact of education to promote the knowledge and attitude on HIV/AIDS prevention: a trial on 17,000 Iranian students

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Abstract: Introduction

It is estimated that 5 million new cases are infected worldwide with the virus of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) with 3 million deaths each year.

The high risk groups for the AIDS include prisoners, addicts, sex workers, and youth.

Some studies showed that lack of knowledge and negative attitude of high risk population, especially young people, about the transmission of disease and its preventive strategies increase the risk of disease. Research reports from Africa, Asia and Latin America has also indicated that educational programmes may have an impact on the prevention of the diseases in the community level.

The aim of this study was to assess the impact and efficacy of educational methods on the promotion of the knowledge and attitude of students on HIV/AIDS prevention in Tabriz, Iran.

Methods

Data concerning this study was collected by self-assessment techniques including a validated questionnaire. The questionnaire included two sets of questions: thirty questions to assess the knowledge, and three more questions, as the second part, to evaluate the attitude of students. A sample of 17000 of students of Tabriz University and Tabriz University of Medical Sciences were taken as the study subjects. They were then prepared to fill the questionnaire. An educational programme was conducted within the student groups (20-40 in each group). The educational programme included a 45-minutes interactive discussion on the preventive strategies and transmission methods of AIDS.

Forty senior medical students were trained by the university departments of Infection Diseases, Psychiatry, and Community Medicine as coordinators of the discussion groups (peer educators). In the second stage of the study, 10 percent of study subjects (1778 students) were randomly selected and the same self-assessment techniques were applied to assess the impact of educational intervention on the promotion of the knowledge and attitude of students on HIV/AIDS prevention.

Likert scaling method was used to measure the knowledge and attitude of students both for before and after the intervention. Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was performed to check the normal distribution of the data, and paired T-test was then used to compare the pre-test vs post-test data.

Results

The findings showed that the knowledge of students increased significantly (P<0.05). The attitude to the problem also increased positively in the subjects (P<0.05).

There was a remarkable significant increase in both knowledge and attitude of the study subjects in terms of AIDS prevention (13 and 12 percent, respectively).

Although a significant increase in the knowledge and attitude was observed in both male and female students, educational intervention had more effect on the knowledge and attitude of female students compared to males. The base line level of awareness and attitude about the prevention of AIDS was however higher in male students compared to females.

Our findings showed that medical compared to non-medical students seem to be more alert on the preventive strategies of the disease both in terms of awareness and attitude.

There was a positive association between the base line level of knowledge with age in all groups of study subjects. The promotion of knowledge and attitude after the educational programme was also significant in all age groups.

Discussion

The results of this study indicated that female students has performed better than male students in terms of the study objectives indicating that female students may pay more attention to prevention, and they are much more alert than male students to the disease. This might be reflecting the fact that females are more sensitive to AIDS as the prevalence of disease is generally higher in women. Both medical and non-medical students had similar significant performance in educational programme.

It is concluded that the short term training courses and continuous educational programmes (i.e. peer education, etc) should be provided to young students in the universities and schools through the course materials promoting the awareness and attitude of youth to this ever-increasing health problem. Course materials should, of course, meet youth demands, and must be acceptable and desired by these age groups.

education - knowledge- attitude - HIV/AIDS -students

Presentation: Oral