



CODEN [USA]: IAJ PBB

ISSN : 2349-7750

## INDO AMERICAN JOURNAL OF PHARMACEUTICAL SCIENCES

SJIF Impact Factor: 7.187

Available online at: <http://www.iajps.com>

Research Article

### KNOWLEDGE OF NURSES REGARDING HIV WORKING IN DISTRICT HEADQUARTERS HOSPITAL BAHAWAL NAGAR

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**Article Received:** July 2021

**Accepted:** August 2021

**Published:** September 2021

**Abstract:**

**Introduction:** Holistic nursing care by skillful hands, vigilant mind and affectionate heart constitute the backbone of management plan in HIV/AIDS. The phobias and stigmas associated with handling of HIV/AIDS patients limits the quality of health care. The purpose of this study is to evaluate the degree of knowledge and understanding towards HIV/AIDS amongst nursing students.

**Methodology:** This cross-sectional study was conducted among 150 selected undergraduate students of College of Nursing, Nishtar Hospital Multan. Pre-test questionnaire was formulated and the responses were summed up against 10 objective items. Anonymity and privacy was maintained throughout the process.

**Results:** Almost half of the nursing students had good knowledge while almost a quintile numbers had incomplete knowledge about HIV/AIDS. Majority of them had negative attitude towards the care of HIV positive patients.

**Conclusions:** In aggregate, nearly half of the respondents had good knowledge about the various aspects of HIV/AIDS; however, majority of them had negative attitude towards the care of PLWHA. The overall knowledge and attitude of senior class was better than their junior counterparts. The training programmes for nurses should aim at confidence and skill building to deal with HIV issues.

**Key words:** Knowledge, Attitude, HIV/AIDS, Nursing students

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Please cite this article in press Fouzia Kanwal et al, *Knowledge Of Nurses Regarding Hiv Working In District Headquarters Hospital Bahawal Nagar., Indo Am. J. P. Sci, 2021; 08(9).*

**INTRODUCTION:**

Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) is caused by Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) which has a steep prevalence worldwide. The toll of HIV infected patients is on the rise since the past 2 decades. The prognosis of AIDS is poor. The vast majority of the cases belong to the reproductive age groups. [2] Lack of universal adherence to infection control protocols, especially disposing off used needles/syringes and accidental needle pricks on bare hands, renders a great threat to the healthcare professionals. [3-6] Noncompliance to internationally accepted protocols during handling of the HIV infected patients doubles the risk of catching an infection by care providers. [7] Nursing care of HIV/AIDS patients is stormed by a constellation of phobias and myths related to psych-social issues. The naive behavior of the nurses towards the needs of HIV/AIDS patients can not only affect the nursing process but also the overall case management. Positive reinforcement and reassurance is pivotal to bring the patient out of destitution and despair as for many the breaking bad news can poison their existence. [10] Considering the gravity of the situation and the deficiencies present within the nursing care of HIV patients, the authors in this study attempted to explore the knowledge of the nursing students in order to sensitize them regarding their professional liabilities.

**METHODS:**

This is a cross-sectional quantitative study conducted over the 150 selected undergraduate students of College of Nursing, Nishtar Hospital Multan. Pre-test questionnaire was formulated and the responses were summed up against 10 objective items. Ethical approval was sought from the concerned department. The extent of knowledge of an individual student on HIV/AIDS was measured on the basis of the given response to 10 objective questions, the correct response to each question was given the score '1' and

incorrect or not-sure response the score '0'. To categorize the student's overall level of knowledge, a knowledge index was constructed and scaled as: poor knowledge (index score  $\leq 3$ ), moderate knowledge (index score 4-6) and good knowledge (index score  $\geq 7$ ).

Data were compiled and then entered into Microsoft excel. Thus, entered data was transferred to Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS 16.0 version) for the analysis. P value less than 0.05 was considered significant. Anonymity and privacy was maintained throughout the process.

**RESULTS:**

A total of 150 nursing students were approached for participation, 120 (80%) completed and returned the response form. Out of total respondents 40 (33.33%) were the students of first year, 40 (33.33%) were of second year and 40 (33.33%) were of the third year nursing. Their mean age was  $19.65 \pm 3.60$  years. Majority of the participants (62.5%) had their schooling from English medium schools and most of the parents/guardians of these students (58.3%) were job oriented. Nearly 78 % knew the correct abbreviation of AIDS. Significant variation was noticed among students of different years. Only 65.00% students of first year as compared to 95.00% among the third year students could give the correct response. Knowledge level among various levels of students was found significantly different ( $p=0.01$ ) as shown in table 1. Students had comparatively good knowledge on modes of transmission of HIV infection. Overall, 91.67% of students had knowledge of HIV transmission through unprotected sexual contact while 62.5% were known about the mother to child transmission. There was significant difference between the knowledge of first, second and third year nursing students on mode of HIV transmission ( $p=0.01$ ). (Table.2).

Class	Correct response (%)	Incorrect response	Total (%)	P-value
First (n=40)	26 (65.00)	14 (35.00)	40 (100.00)	P=0.01
Second (n=40)	30 (75.00)	10 (25.00)	40 (100.00)	
Third (n=40)	38 (95.00)	2 (5.00)	40 (100.00)	
Total (n=120)	94 (78.33)	26 (21.66)	120 (100.00)	

Only 57% of the respondents had good knowledge on methods of disposal of needles and syringes after use. Only about 30.00%, 40.00% and 72.00% had good knowledge on this regard on first, second- and third-year students

respectively. The knowledge difference between different class of students was statistically significant ( $p=0.001$ ) (table 3).

Table 2. Correct knowledge on mode of transmission of HIV infection					
Class	Sexual contact Total (%)	Blood transmission Total (%)	Contaminated needle and syringe Total (%)	Infected Mother to baby Total (%)	P - value
1 <sup>st</sup> (n=40)	33 (82.50)	28 (70.00)	30( 75.0)	18 (45.00)	P= 0.01
2 <sup>nd</sup> (n=40)	34(85.00)	31(77.50)	32(80.00)	27(67.5)	
3 <sup>rd</sup> (n=40)	40(100.00)	38(95.00)	37(92.50)	38(95.00)	
* Total	107(89.16)	97(80.83)	99(82.50)	83(69.17)	

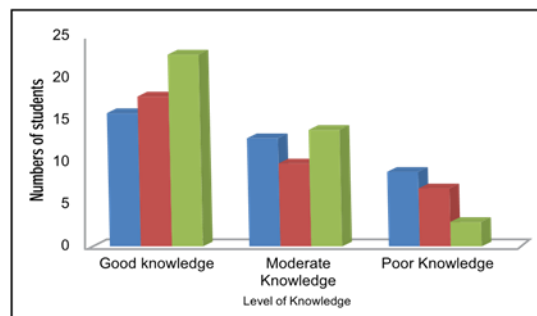
Table 3. Knowledge regarding proper disposal of used syringes/needles					
Class	Bend the needle and through in the dustbin	Disposed in proof container with disinfectant	Throw in the dustbin directly	Recap the used needles and throw in the dustbin	P- value
First (n=40)	10 (25.00)	12 (30.00)	8(20.00)	8 (20.00)	P= 0.001
Second (n=40)	7 (17.50)	16 (40.00)	7(17.50)	5 (12.50.)	
Third (n=40)	3 (7.50)	29 (72.50)	6(15.00)	2 (5.00)	
Total	20 (16.67)	57 (47.50)	21(17.50)	15(12.50)	

Nearly 57.00% of total respondents were aware that youths are commonly affected by HIV infection. The majority of third year students (83.00%) were aware of this fact as compared to second year (57.00%) and first year (35.00%). These differences were statistically significant ( $p=0.003$ ) (table 4).

Table 4. Respondents knowledge about most commonly affected age group in HIV/AIDS									
Com- monly affected age group	First Year (n=40)		Second Year (n=40)		Third Year (n=40)		Total		P-value
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	
Infant	10	25.00	9	22.50	1	2.50	20	16.67	P=0.003
Child	12	30.00	6	15.00	3	7.50	21	17.50	
Youth	13	32.50	21	52.50	34	85.00	68	56.67	
Old age	5	12.5	4	10.00	2	5.00	11	9.17	
Total	40	100	40	100	40	100	120	100	

On the account of overall knowledge level, nearly half of the nursing students had good knowledge followed by moderate knowledge (33.00%). Surprisingly, there were nearly 17.00% of the respondents had poor knowledge on

HIV/ AIDS. The overall knowledge level was higher amongst the seniors nursing students than their junior counterparts and these knowledge differences were statistically significant ( $p=0.03$ ) (figure 1).



### DISCUSSION:

It is summed up as that the nursing students possessed a satisfactory knowledge regarding definition of HIV and AIDS; however, a large number of them had inadequate knowledge and misconceptions related to the pathophysiology, modes of transmission, disease prevention. Overall two third of the respondents were having good knowledge and one third possessed moderate knowledge. The above observation is congruent with the findings of previous studies undertaken by different groups of health care and management professionals. [11,12] However, this observation demands the due attention of the healthcare policy makers and the concerned departments

The level of knowledge was found different among various years nursing students where overall knowledge level of senior level students was high from their junior counterpart and these knowledge differences were statistically highly significant. Similar study conducted on Turkey revealed identical findings that Scores increased parallel with students' grade. [13]

It was found a willingness of majority of nursing students to attend HIV infected and AIDS patients. This finding revealed that the majority of the nursing students have no reservation in accepting any offer in regard to caring for HIV/AIDS patients after completion of the study. (65.5%) However, few of them had prejudices regarding treatment of the HIV infected patient due to fear of transmission of HIV. However, it is apparent that additional information is required regarding the transmissibility of HIV infection; to correct the noted misconceptions such as HIV could be transmitted by shaking hands, staying in the same room, studying in the same school etc. There problem therefore, appears to be inadequate knowledge of HIV and AIDS infection control rather than lack of enthusiasm.

Majority of the nursing students vowed to accept any offer regarding the care of HIV/AIDS patients in their future life which shows the dedication and the resolve towards the ailing humanity and their oath.

It is apparent that many health care professionals like doctors and nurses feel they have inadequate clinical and counselling skills to deal with HIV and its implications. Thus, the training programmes for health care professionals like nurses, doctors and other categories of health workers should aim at increasing the confidence and skills so that they can cope with HIV issues.

### CONCLUSION:

Nearly half of the nursing students possessed good knowledge related to various aspects of HIV/AIDS; however, level wise differences in the knowledge were evident amongst them. This ratio is a matter of great concern for a developing country like Pakistan. Hence it is suggested that the training programmes for nurse should aim at increasing the confidence and skills so that they can cope with HIV issues.

### Acknowledgements:

We are very grateful to the worthy teachers, parents and colleagues for their kind input, prayers and guidance.

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