

AIDS - Related Stigma

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A true AIDS epidemic is not a future possibility for Karnataka, it is a present reality, according to Behavioural Surveillance Survey (BSS) conducted by National AIDS Control Organisation (NACO) in 2001.

AIDS is becoming a disease burden in Karnataka, we therefore sought to find out the knowledge and attitude of the people regarding AIDS. Hence a survey was conducted to assess the knowledge and attitude of the people regarding AIDS-related stigma in selected villages of Udupi District of Karnataka in the years 2004 and 2005.

The objectives of the study were to assess the knowledge and attitude of the people on AIDS-related stigma and find out the association between the level of knowledge, attitude and selected variables.

Study Design : This was a survey study. To assess the knowledge of subjects a 23-item 'yes/no' questionnaire was used and to find out the attitude, a Likert scale with 21 items was formulated.

Materials and Methods

Data was collected from two villages in Udupi district : Athrady and Herebettu, selected by random sampling. The total sample size was

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250 out of which 67 (26.8%) were males and 183 (73.2%) were females. The samples were selected by non-probability purposive sampling from an age group of 15 years and above. The content validity of the tool was obtained and reliability was established by split-half method and Spearman Brown prophecy formula. The computed r for the knowledge questionnaire was 0.835 and for the attitude scale it was 0.85. The tool was administered at home setup. The knowledge questions were in the areas of participation in social activities, sexual partnership, care of patients with AIDS and social interaction. The attitude scale included: sharing common items, working together, culture and belief, attitude to self and family relationship.

Results and Discussion

Majority of the samples (59.5%) were less than or equal to 35 years, education of less than 10th standard (59%), not working (58.5%), married (80%) and having exposure to mass media i.e. TV (92%). No sample had a family member with AIDS. In the knowledge item 125 (50%) reported that they did not want to participate in social activities with an AIDS client. The attitude scale showed that people did not want to share articles of an AIDS patient, 43 (17.2%).

A study conducted by Mukherjee & Sikdar on impact of educational status on AIDS awareness and attitude in 1999 also reveals a negative attitude of the people towards AIDS.

Association of knowledge was found only with the following : age ($\chi^2=4.88$), education ($\chi^2=6.84$), exposure to TV ($\chi^2=6.42$). The survey also showed that majority of the people got information on AIDS from TV (80.6%). Association was not found with other variables as the study population was small and non-probability purposive sampling was used to select samples.

The findings of the study imply that relationship exists between knowledge and attitude among people for AIDS ($r=0.3$). Borsum & Gjermo conducted a study on relationship between knowledge and attitudes regarding HIV / AIDS among dental school employees and students at the University of Oslo; the study also revealed significant relationship between the knowledge and attitude of the people on AIDS ($r=0.43$).

Conclusion

People do not have adequate knowledge on AIDS. This leads to undesirable attitude of people towards persons with AIDS. Education and awareness campaigns need to be conducted to improve this so that stigma regarding the disease can be overcome.

Article continued...

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