

KNOWLEDGE AND OPINION ABOUT HIV/AIDS AMONG LONG ROUTE TRUCK DRIVERS

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Abstract :

A cross sectional study was carried out on 235 truck drivers operating at Kanpur- Jhansi highway to assess their knowledge and opinion about HIV/AIDS. It was observed that about 73% had heard about HIV/AIDS. two third were aware about sexual transmission as the route of transmission. Television was the main source of their knowledge (76.74%). But knowledge on other aspects of HIV was very less, only one-third were aware about preventive role of condom. Less than half (45.95%) were of the opinion that this disease can be prevented. It was dis heartening to note that (34.46%) were in favor to separate AIDS patient from family and (43.40%) were in favor todivorce spouse having AIDS. Withthis background of Knowledge about half of truck drivers (48.94%) were of the opinion to avoid sex with attractive stranger.

Key Words : HIV/AIDS, truck drivers.

Introduction :

Acquired Immuno-Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) is the end stage of infection with Human Immuno-Deficiency Virus (HIV), characterized by a cluster of life threatening illnesses. HIV infected people suffer intermittent bouts of illnesses that increase in severity as their immune system collapse. One male occupation associated with increased risk HIV infection is long distance truck driving profession that requires prolonged absence form home and family (Singh et. al 1999)¹. While moving over long distance the truck drivers stop at road side hotels, known as Dhabas and small villages for taking rest (Singh et al 1994)². Since there is no cure of HIV/AIDS, therefore for effective prevention and control of HIV/AIDS, it is essential to assess the knowledge of people particularly with high risk behavior on different aspect of HIV/AIDS and their opinion

towards HIV/AIDS patients for promoting behavior change through IEC, Pear education and voluntary counseling.

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Material & Methods :

The study was carried out on 235 long route truck drivers operating at Kanpur-Jhansi Highway. Required data was collected on a pre-designed and pre-tested schedule by direct personal interview method. Most of the questions were close ended with multiple answer During

the survey, firstly the written consent was taken from individuals after detailing about objective and procedure of the study. On an average 20-25 minutes were spent for interviewing each individual. Time was limited, however effort was made to contact maximum number of truck drivers.

Objectives :

1. To assess the knowledge about HIV/AIDS and its routes of transmission.
2. To assess the opinion about behavioural aspects of HIV/AIDS.

Results & Discussion :

In this study, a fairly high proportion of respondents (73.19%) were aware of HIV/AIDS. Bhasin et al (1999)³ in their study on college students reported that majority of boys (97.27%) and all the girls were aware that HIV/AIDS occur in India. About 46% truck drivers were aware that AIDS is a Preventable disease.

Similar result was also observed by Chandra et al (1993)⁴ (52%). But study on naval personnel carried in 1991 reported that 77% of these were aware about preventability of AIDS (Thergaonkar et al, 1991)⁵. This might be due to high educational level of naval personnel. Only one-third (33.69%) respondents were aware about the role of condom to prevent the transmission of HIV/AIDS (Table-1). Whereas, awareness of preventive role of condom was 60% in the study of Thergaonkar et al (1991)⁵, 77.5% in Chandra et al (1993)⁴, 63% in Velhal et al (1994)⁶ and 70% in Francis et al (1994)⁷. Low level of awareness about use of condom in prevention of AIDS may be due to low level of educational status of truck drivers as observed in this study that more than 43% truckers were either illiterate (21.28%) or just literate (21.70%). Promotion of use of condom its provision to the community may go a long way in preventing transmission of HIV infection (Arira et al 2000)⁸.

TABLE-1

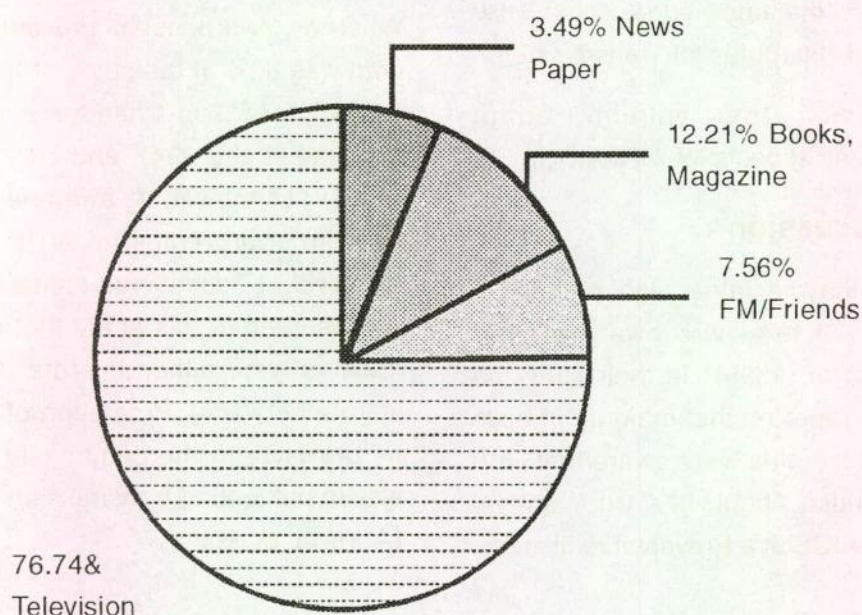
Knowledge regarding general aspects of HIV/AIDS among truck drivers.

Question	Yes (no)	Percentage
1) Do you know about AIDS ?	172	73.19
2) Is there any vaccine available for prevention of AIDS?	64	27.23
3) Is AIDS curable?	66	28.09
4) Is AIDS Preventable?	108	45.95
5) Can condom be used for prevention of AIDS?	79	33.69

Regarding sources of knowledge on HIV/AIDS in the study, television (76.74%) was the main source (Fig.1). Other sources were books/magazine (12.21%), family member/friends (7.56%) and newspapers (3.49%).

Television was also found as the main & ource of information whereas, Shehgal (1992)¹², Thergaonkar et al (1991)⁵ and Lal et al (1994)¹³ had reported newspaper as the chief source of information. It is because of easy access and viewer ship of T.V. now days.

Fig. 1 : Source of Knowledge about HIV/AIDS of truck drivers.



Sexual route of HIV transmission was known to 69.78% truck drivers, while 39.15% and 34.89% were also aware that infected needles and blood transfusion respectively as the route of transmission. Vertical route was known to only 18.70% truck drivers. misconceptions regarding mode of transmission of HIV such as casual contact, sharing utensil, sneezing and coughing etc. were also quite prevalent (Table-2). In studies of Agarwal et al (1996)¹⁴, Chandra et al (1993)⁴ and Bhasin et al (1999)³, 50%, 85% and 97.61% respondents reported sexual route as a mode of transmission for AIDS respectively. 51% students were aware of vertical transmission of HIV (Velhal et al 1994)⁶. In their study 50% and 51% respondents said that it can be transmitted by blood and through infected needles and syringes respectively.

TABLE - 2
Knowledge on routes of transmission*

Statement	No.	Percentage
Casual Contact	41	17.45
Sneezing, Coughing	58	24.68
Mosquito Bite	71	30.21
Multiple sexual partner	164	69.78
Infected Needle & Syringes	92	39.15
Blood Transfusion	82	34.89
Mother's to new borne	44	18.70

*Analysis is based on multiple responses

TABLE -3
Opinion of truck drivers regarding HIV/AIDS

Particulars	(No.235) Number	Percentage (%)
1) HIV/AIDS as public health problem.	93	39.57
2) HIV/AIDS investigation before marriage.	111	47.23
3) HIV/AIDS investigation in hospital admitted patients	97	41.28
4) HIV/AIDS investigation for every foreign tourist.	123	52.34
5) Sex education be a lesson for children.	97	41.28
6) AIDS patient be separated from family.	81	34.46
7) Should a person touch and care an AIDS patient.	59	25.11
8) Avoid sex with attractive stranger.	115	48.94
9) Can AIDS patient work in factory, offices?	149	63.40
10) Person should divorce his/her spouse having AIDS.	102	43.40

As much as (39.57%) respondents considered AIDS as major public health problem and (47.23%) were of the opinion that investigation of HIV/AIDS should be necessary before marriage (Table-3). About 41% subjects accepted that all admitted patients should be investigated for HIV/AIDS, while more than half (52.34%) were of the view that foreign tourist should be investigated. Sex education should be a lesson for school children was opined by (41.28%) respondents. Nearly one third truck drivers were in favour of separation of AIDS patients from family, about (43%) were also of the view to divorce their spouse who had HIV/AIDS. Shehgal (1992)¹² in his study in different high risk and low risk groups also observed similar results. Only one fourth (25.11%) of respondents were in favour of touching and caring of AIDS patient. This is the reflection of poor knowledge of truck drivers about correct mode of transmission as stated above. Nearly half (48.94%) of the respondents were in favour of avoiding sex with stranger. Shehgal (1992)¹² reported almost similar results in his study. He observed that 57% respondents expressed that one should not have sex with stranger. Francis et al (1994)⁷, in their study found that 14% respondents had agreed to take risk of AIDS rather than miss the chance of having sex with an attractive stranger. Majority (63.40%) of truckers were in favour of working of AIDS patient in factory / offices.

Conclusion :

In this study it was observed that overall knowledge about HIV/AIDS was very far from satisfactory level and therefore opinion was also poor. To combat this there is urgent need to develop good television and mass communication programme regarding HIV/AIDS as majority of respondents reported that television was the main source of information for them. In the end it is once again emphasized that if the spread of HIV/AIDS pandemic to the remote villages and families is to be prevented, the truck driver must be made aware of the facts about the infection and motivated to avoid high risk behaviors or at least practice safe sex.

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