A Survey of General Knowledge Pertaining to HIV/AIDS Transmission at St. Luke’s Catholic Hospital Apam

JADE PAGKAS-BATHER
HIV in Ghana

- Rate of HIV in Ghana is 1.5% (National HIV Prevalence and AIDS Estimate 2012)

- HIV transmission is highest among adults, ages 40-44 (4%) and adolescents, ages 15-24 (2.1%) (GHS 2009)

- Adolescents make up the fastest growing population of HIV-infected Ghanaians

- Increased awareness has not decreased transmission (Amoako-Agyeman 2012)
Barriers to Knowledge about HIV

- Mythology
- Religion
- Socio-cultural attitudes about sex
- Pure focus on biomedical knowledge
HIV Mythology

- HIV can be transmitted by kissing or touching
- Created by white people to decimate Africans
- Africans are more susceptible to HIV infection
- HIV can be cured by sleeping with virgins
HIV Mythology

- HIV is a gay disease
- Women are less likely to be infected
- HIV is spread only by sex workers

(Adolescents endorsing myths were less likely to use condoms than their non-myth endorsing counterparts. This is also true in adults.)
The Wrath of God and HIV

- HIV as punishment for sexual promiscuity (Amoako-Agyeman 2012)

- Some people are pre-destined to get HIV (Yamba 1997)

- More religious adolescents initiate sex later, but are less likely to use condoms when they engage in sexual activity (Amoako-Agyeman 2012)
That’s What You Get: Socio-cultural Factors in HIV Knowledge and Transmission

- Less educated individuals were less likely to use condoms
- Less educated individuals knew less about HIV transmission
- Mythical beliefs were more common in the Central, Western, Eastern, Ashanti, and Brong Ahafo regions (Tenkorang 2011).
Mythical beliefs were more common in the Akan, then the Ga Adangbes, those speaking northern languages, and Ewes (Amoako-Agyeman).

HIV positive mothers with persistent food insecurity faced a steady decline in income secondary to psychological and basic-needs related stressors (Garcia 2013).
Previous attempts at HIV education in Ghana focused on a biomedical model, which has not slowed the rate of transmission in adolescents.

University students at a private university in Accra were knowledgeable about HIV/AIDS, but had low rates of testing (Asante 2013).

“It was only those with a clear understanding of the biological mechanisms surrounding HIV transmission (identified as people with complete knowledge) who rejected myths about AIDS” (Amoako-Agyeman 2012).
Methods

- 15 multi-step question survey pertaining to HIV risk behavior, sexual health, and general knowledge about HIV transmission
- Multiple choice and free response
- Surveyed in OPD at St. Luke’s Catholic Hospital Apam
- Translation was provided so that patients were asked the questions in their native language, Fanti
Methods

- Ages 15 to 80
- Ensured confidentiality
- Able to ask questions
- Responses were summarized in an Excel database,
- Qualitative responses were evaluated based on individual answers.
26 surveys were collected
73.08% of respondents were women
26.92% were men
Average age was 37.8 years old
96.15% of those surveyed had heard of HIV
88.46% were sexually active
11.53% denied sexual activity
Average age of sexual onset: 18.75 years old
• All participants who were sexually active responded that they practiced vaginal sex
• 0% admitted to either anal or oral sexual activity
• The average number of sexual partners reported by participants was 2.43.
• 11.53% of participants admitted to having a STI
• 7.69% of participants admitted to having contracted Gonorrhea in the past (and this was the only reported STI)
# Demographic Data

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<table>
<thead>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Female</strong></td>
<td>73.08%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Male</strong></td>
<td>26.92%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Average age</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Average number lifetime sexual partners</strong></td>
<td>2.43</td>
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<td><strong>History of sexually transmitted infection</strong></td>
<td>11.53%</td>
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Data & Analysis

- 88.46% of people believed HIV was spread through sexual intercourse
- 84.61% of those surveys believed HIV could be spread through blood products
- 65.38% of individuals thought that HIV could be spread through IVDU
- 53.84% of respondents thought HIV could be spread by kissing
- 7.69% of respondents thought HIV could be spread through interacting with an HIV+ individual
Belief about HIV Transmission

- Sexual contact: 90.00%
- Blood products: 80.00%
- Intravenous drug use: 70.00%
- Kissing: 50.00%
- Interaction with HIV+ individual: 0.00%
Data & Analysis

- 0% admitted to always using condoms during sexual activity
- 3.84% admitted to using condoms often
- 15.38% of participants admitted to sometimes using condoms
- 69.23% admitted to never using condoms
- 61.53% said they believed condoms decreased the risk of HIV transmission
- 11.53% did not believe that condoms decreased the risk of HIV transmission
Condom Use

- Always: 0%
- Often: 10%
- Sometimes: 20%
- Never: 70%
Q4: What is the difference between HIV and AIDS?

- ‘I don’t know—no difference.’ or ‘They are the same.’ (8)
- ‘I don’t know.’ or ‘No idea.’ (6)
- ‘HIV is the virus that causes the disease called AIDS. Therefore HIV is the virus and AIDS is the disease.’ (2)
- ‘If you have HIV you can be given some medications to help, but if you [have] AIDS that’s it.’ (1)
- ‘HIV is more severe than AIDS.’
- ‘HIV is the virus and AIDS is the deficiency or syndrom [sic].’ (1)
- ‘HIV stands for Human Immuen Virus AIDS stands for Acquire, Immue Diffence Synoms [sic]’ (1)
- ‘HIV is not matured enough to kill but the AIDS can kill.’ (1)
- ‘HIV is a viral disease that lives in the immune system and when it is not treated it leads to AIDS.’ (1)
- ‘Is there a difference?’ (1)
Question: If you do not use condoms, what is your reason for not using them?

- ‘No reason’ (5)
- ‘Married’ (4)
- ‘Husband died’/deceased spouse (2)
- Unsure (1)
- ‘I don’t like it/I don’t want to use it’ (1)
- ‘It [condoms] just came recently.’ (1)
- ‘I thought it’s a sin’ (1)
- ‘Single.’ (1)
- ‘Not sexually active.’ (1)
- ‘When the condom was introduced, I wasn’t that sexually active.’ (1)
- ‘Actually prefer coitus interruptus.’ (1)
- ‘I don’t know about it.’ (1)
- ‘I want to give birth so I don’t use condoms.’ (1)
HIV Testing Rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Percent tested for HIV</th>
<th>Percent who want to be tested for HIV</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Once or more</td>
<td>20.00%</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>80.00%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>80.00%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>10.00%</td>
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Discussion

- Participants had good knowledge about routes of HIV transmission
- Likely to endorse casual routes of transmission (kissing)
- Few had a good biological understanding of HIV
- Few had an understanding of the difference between HIV and AIDS
- Majority believed that abstinence and condom use decreased HIV transmission
- The majority said they never used condoms
Discussion

- More needs to be done to address holes in biomedical education pertaining to HIV and AIDS in Ghana
- Divide between knowledge and behavior
- Participants knew condoms reduced HIV risk, but few had ever used them
Conclusion

- A multifaceted approach that focused on debunking mythology, a biomedical explanation of HIV/AIDS transmission and effect on the immune system, as well as a focus on behavior change and the merits of condom use (both pregnancy and STI prevention) may provide Ghana with a more holistic approach to keeping HIV/AIDS prevalence low and preventing new episodes of transmission.
Limitations

- Small sample size
- Short duration
- Translation issues
- Lack of comparison study between Apam and Axim
Acknowledgements

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References


References


