

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



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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).

That's What You Get: Socio-cultural Factors in HIV Knowledge and Transmission



- 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).

Biomedical HIV Knowledge



- 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.

Demographics, Data & Analysis



- 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

Demographics, Data & Analysis



- 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



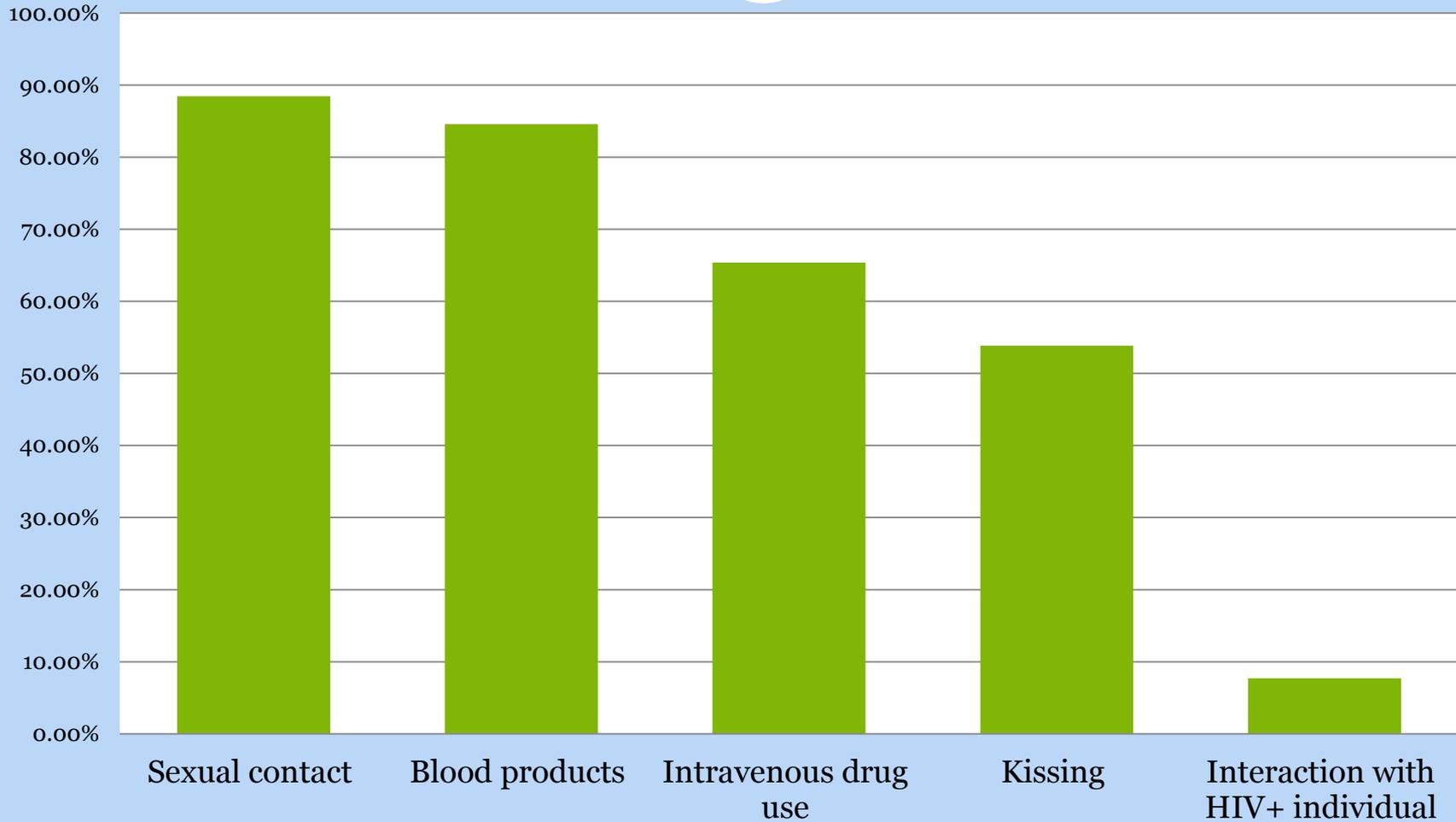
Female	73.08%
Male	26.92%
Average age	37.8 years
Sexually active	88.46%
Average age of sexual activity	18.75 years
Average number lifetime sexual partners	2.43
History of sexually transmitted infection	11.53%

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

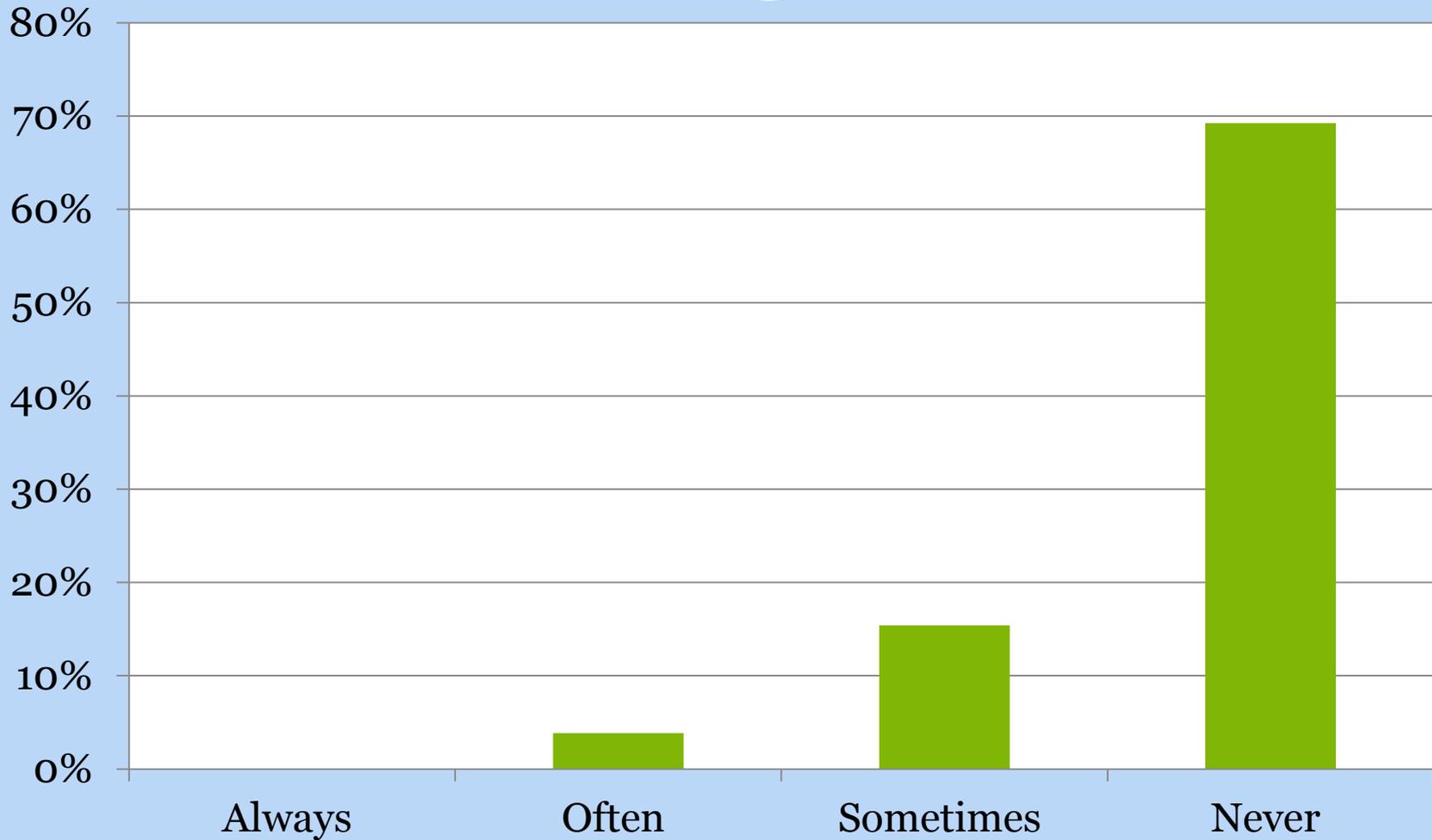


Data & Analysis



- 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



Data & Analysis



- **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 are [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)

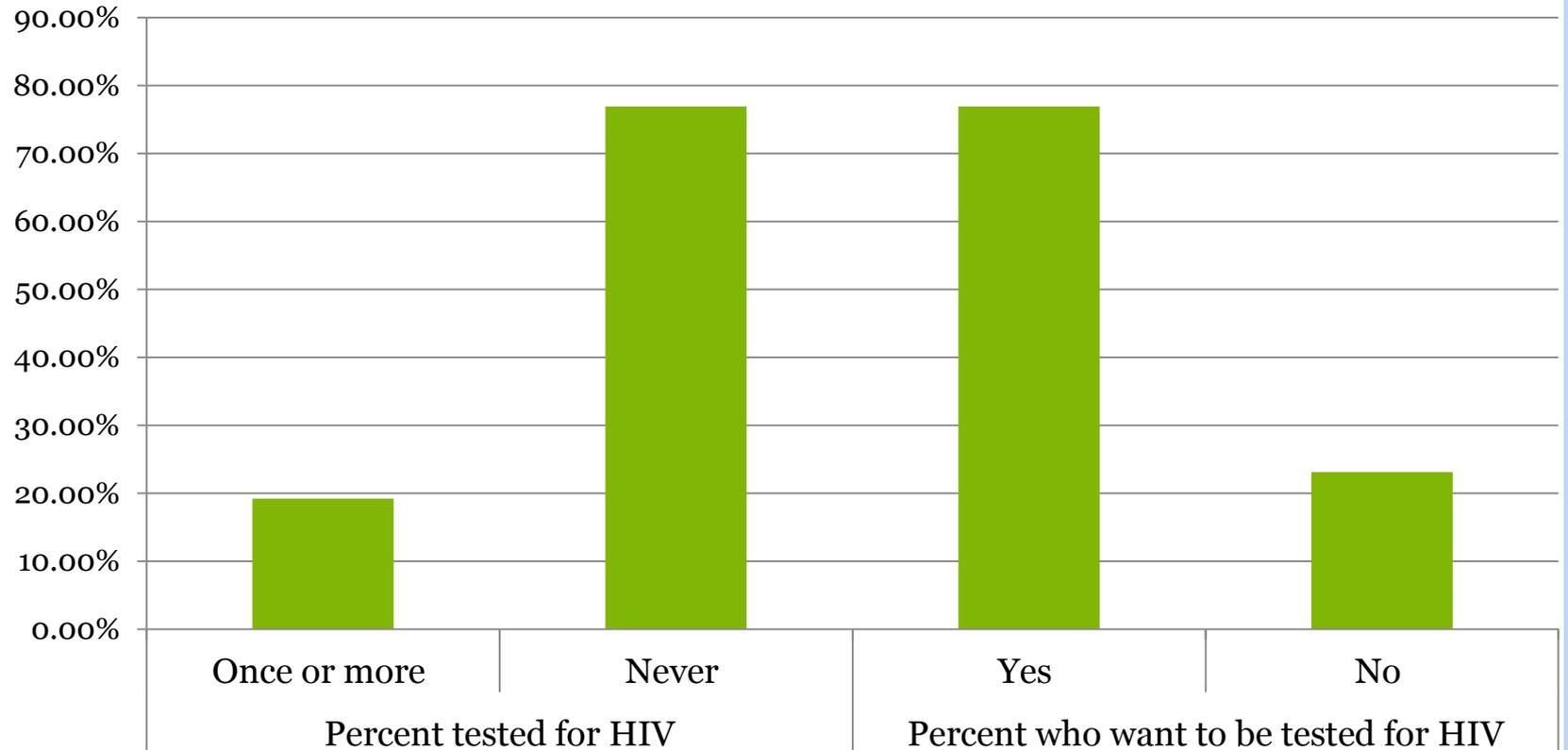
Data & Analysis



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



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

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