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Evaluating women’s knowledge on reproductive health/sexual behavior and risk of HIV infection

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Introduction: Globally, the HIV infection rate in women has been trending down around the world but that is not the case in Iran where the number of newly HIV infected women has been increasing. Changes in HIV transmission routs from needle sharing to sexual transmission in Iran increases the need for better education of women on the prevention of HIV.

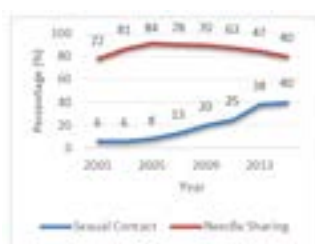


Fig 1: Changes in HIV transmission routes in Iran

Methods: We recruited 250 women who have attended behavioral clinics or shelters in Tehran. We used a standardized questionnaire, which asked about demographics, sexual partner and knowledge about HIV/STDs.

Results: The median age of our group surveyed was 40. 82% were married and among them 16% were married but lived alone. Among the total 250 surveyed, 56% (140) were sexually active in the last 30 days, 19.2% (48) had a history of a one-night stand and 2.4% had more than one sexual partner. 212 people answered questions about condom use, 60% (127) of them did not use condoms at all.

Reason of not using condom	Number	Percentage
Condom was not easily accessible	12	9.4
My partner doesn't like it	38	30
It's difficult to use	23	18.1
I don't know why	42	33.1
Condom is expensive	7	5.5
Both are HIV +	5	3.9

Table 1: Reasons for not using condoms

Question	Yes (%)	I don't know	Total #
Are you aware of STDs transmitted by saliva?	79 (30)	29 (11.5)	200
Would you take care of the HIV+ family member?	111 (44.3)	93 (37.1)	254
Can an HIV+ person work in public places?	138 (54.7)	94 (36)	254
Can an HIV+ person be a school teacher?	162 (71.8)	27 (10.5)	224
Do you know HIV test results transmitted?	78 (37)	23 (10)	204

Table 2 is about HIV knowledge

Regarding knowledge about signs and symptoms related to STDs, we retrieved answers from 229 cases. 63% believe abdominal pain have no relationship to STDs. Also 44%, 43%, 37%, 40% believed that dyspareunia, dysuria, malodorous vaginal discharge and change in color of vaginal discharge, respectively, are not linked to STDs. This means that the knowledge is only about 50%. 13% who presented with these symptoms in the past 30 days have not sought medical evaluation.

We need to emphasize the use of condoms among the male population but we faced with a challenge to do so because it goes against the government’s campaign of pronatalism. Improving the knowledge of protected sex should start from the teenage years and at school to reach maximum STD prevention planning. Most women in our study did not know about healthy sexual lifestyles and this shows the need for sexual health education before marriage or even in schools.

Biography

Foroughi M has completed her graduation from Medical School at the Iran University of Medical Sciences in 2011 and obtained a special Doctorate of Research at TUMS in 2014. She worked at the Iranian Research Center for HIV/AIDS (IRCHA) as a Medical Researcher and Physician from 2009 and has 15 publications. She is now working as a Research Fellow at Aventura Hospital in Florida.

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