

KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDES OF FEMALE STREET VENDORS TOWARDS HIV/AIDS IN VHEMBE DISTRICT, SOUTH AFRICA

By

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Abstract

Background

HIV/AIDS is a global health problem which deserves utmost attention especially in a country where its prevalence continues to rise despite the efforts being made to curtail its spread. A correct knowledge and positive attitude towards the virus and those infected are key steps in its prevention.

Purpose of the study

This study is focused on assessing the level of knowledge of female street vendors in Thohoyandou about HIV/AIDS and their attitude towards the virus and those infected by it.

Methodology

A quantitative, cross-sectional survey design was employed in this study. Two hundred respondents were randomly selected among the female street vendors and they were required to fill structured questionnaires. Pretest and test-retest method was used to ensure the reliability of the instrument. Data were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.0. Chi-square test was used to compare differences between variables and statistical significance was set at $p < 0.05$.

Results

About 4 out of 10 of the respondents ($n=83$, 41.5%) were over 40 years, Christians (89.2%), single (46.7%) and the majority (85.0%) completed secondary education. Many respondents have correct knowledge about the modes of HIV transmission. Overall, a total of 15, 133 and 52 respondents respectively had poor, good and excellent knowledge about HIV/AIDS respectively. There is no significant association between age or level of education and the level of knowledge about HIV assessed in the population (p -values: 0.75 and 0.21 respectively). Almost all the respondents have positive attitudes towards HIV and those infected by the virus; though, only 57.5% of them were positive towards taking antiretroviral drugs in pregnancy if indicated.

Conclusion

Most female street vendors in Thohoyandou have a good knowledge about the modes of HIV transmission, but a rather poor knowledge about the important modes of HIV prevention. Many

have positive attitudes towards those who are infected with HIV, but do not know the importance of using antiretroviral drugs if tested positive for HIV in pregnancy.

Recommendations

HIV information providers and health workers should pay more attention to enlightening women about the means of preventing HIV and the importance of taking antiretroviral drugs in pregnancy if tested positive.

Key words: Knowledge, attitude, female street vendors, HIV/AIDS