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## Awareness about RTI and facts of HIV/AIDS among rural college going girls in Varanasi district

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### Abstract

**Background:** Knowledge among youth specially girls before they become sexually active can lay the foundation for a responsible lifestyle, including healthy relationships and safe sex habits.

**Objective:** To know the awareness of HIV/AIDS among college going girls residing in rural area of Varanasi district.

**Material and Methods:** Present study is a cross- sectional study. Data collection was done from the period August 2013- February 2015.

**Respondents:** 360 college going girls residing in rural area, from two randomly selected colleges of Varanasi district.

**Results:** In the present study mostly girls (61.7%) belonged to age group of 19 years and above. 73.3% reported that they had no knowledge about Reproductive Tract Infections but 97.5% had heard of HIV/AIDS. Majority 73.6% named all four modes of transmission of HIV/AIDS i.e. through unprotected sex, transfusion of infected blood, from infected mother to her child and by sharing of syringe.

**Recommendation:** HIV/AIDS messages should be available to all, especially to youth who are more vulnerable to HIV/AIDS.

**Keywords:** Awareness, youth, HIV/AIDS, knowledge

### 1. Introduction

Reproductive Tract Infections (RTIs) is one of the most challenging health issue is increasing worldwide. The AIDS pandemic causing suffering and death to an increasing number of men and women and children. RTI includes all infections of reproductive tract whether transmitted sexually or not. Adolescent and young girls are the age group most vulnerable to Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) and HIV/AIDS, 32.42 per cent of people living with HIV/AIDS in India were between the age of 15 and 29 (NACO, 2005) . NFHS data suggest that young women were as likely as adult women to report STIs or symptoms of STIs (IIPS and Macro International, 2007). This clearly indicates that young girls are at high risk of contracting STIs/AIDS infects.

Poor knowledge economic factors barriers in utilization of services, lack of awareness of parents and stigma to utilize services increases their vulnerability. With this background present study was conducted to know the awareness of youth, particularly college going girls of rural area of Varanasi district.

### 2. Material and Methods

Present study is a cross-sectional study conducted between August 2013 to February 2015. The data were collected from two colleges i.e. Sardar Ballabh Bhai Patel Degree College, Bacchaon of Kashividyaapeeth Block and Pandit Deen Dayal Upadhyay Rajkiya Balika Mahavidyalaya of Sewapuri Block of Varanasi district. Sample size was calculated to be 360 using the formula  $n=4PQ/L^2$ , at 5% significance with 10% permissible error. The interview was taken at college in the free hours, lunch time or as per convenience of participants. 360 rural college going girls were selected from random sampling technique.

A pre-designed and pre-tested questionnaire –cum –interview schedule was used as tool of the study. Questions related to awareness regarding HIV/AIDS, its mode of transmission, and source of information were asked.

**2.1 Statistical analysis:** Data collected was entered into Microsoft excel and analysed with SPSS version 16 by means of simple comparison of proportions.

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### 3. Results

In the present study, majority of girls, 61.7% belonged to age 19 year and above with mean age  $18.89 \pm 1.08$  year. Out of 360 respondents 73.3% rural college going girls had no knowledge about RTI problem. The table shows that age of respondents, their level of education, marital status, family type was found significantly associated with awareness about RTI. Young girls (up to age of 18 years) was found more aware than the older girls (19 year and above) regarding RTI awareness (see Table 1).

**Table 1:** Distribution of respondents according to their awareness about reproductive tract infections (RTI) on the basis of social variables (i.e. age, religion, year of education, marital status, family type and MPCI).

Variables	Awareness about RTI					
	No		Yes		Total	
Age	N	%	N	%	N	%
up to 18	93	67.4	45	32.6	138	100.0
19 and above	171	77.0	51	23.0	222	100.0
Total	264	73.3	96	26.7	360	100.0
$\chi^2 = 4.04, df=1, P<0.05$						
Religion						
Hindu	243	73.6	87	26.4	330	100.0
Muslim	21	70.0	9	30.0	30	100.0
$\chi^2 = 0.19, df=1, P>0.05$						
Year of education						
I Year	55	64.0	31	36.0	86	100.0
II Year	141	73.8	50	26.2	191	100.0
III Year	68	81.9	15	18.1	83	100.0
$\chi^2 = 7.03, df=2, P<0.05$						
Marital status						
Married	52	83.9	10	16.1	62	100.0
Unmarried	212	71.1	86	28.9	298	100.0
$\chi^2 = 4.25, df=1, P<0.05$						
Family type						
Nuclear	136	68.0	64	32.0	200	100.0
Joint	128	80.0	32	20.0	160	100.0
$\chi^2 = 6.55, df=1, P<0.05$						
MPCl						
<900	86	73.5	31	26.5	117	100.0
900-1200	117	77.5	34	22.5	151	100.0
>1200	61	66.3	31	33.7	92	100.0

A decreasing pattern of awareness was observed with the increase of level of education i.e. 36% girls in I year, 26.2% in II year and 18.1% in III year had knowledge about RTI. This may be because young girls had more exposure to media than the older. On the basis of marital status percentage of girls regarding awareness of RTI was higher among unmarried girls than the married.

**Table 2:** Distribution of respondents on the basis of their knowledge about various facts of AIDS.

Heard about AIDS	N	Percentage
Yes	351	97.5
No	09	2.5
Total	360	100.0
Knowledge about the fact**	N (351)	Percentage
It is a fatal disease	186	53.0
This is incurable	105	29.9
Spread through virus	151	43.0

\*\* Multiple answers

It was found that majority (97.5%) rural college going girls had heard about AIDS (Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome) only 2.5% reported not for the same. Out of 351,

53.0% (N=186) knew that AIDS is fatal disease, followed by 43.0% knew that it spread through virus and 29.0% rural college going girls reported that AIDS is not curable (see Table 2).

**Table 3:** Distribution of respondent's on the basis of knowledge about "different mode of transmission of AIDS".

Mode of transmission	N	Percentage
1. Unprotected Sex/ multiple partners	53	14.7
2. Transfusion of infected blood	11	3.1
3. From infected mother to child	07	1.9
4. Sharing of syringes	18	5.0
5. All of the above	265	73.6
6. None of the above	06	1.7
Total	360	100

Regarding knowledge about mode of transmission majority 73.6% named all four modes of transmission i.e. through unprotected sex, transfusion of infected blood, from infected mother to her child and by sharing of syringe, followed by 14.7% who were aware that unprotected sexual contact, as the mode of transmission for HIV/AIDS (see Table 3).

**Table 4:** Distribution of respondents according to sources of knowledge about AIDS (N=351).

Sources of knowledge**	N(351)	Percentage
1. T.V.	267	76.1
2. Radio	73	20.8
3. Family members	28	8.0
4. Friends	42	12.0
5. Poster	28	8.0
6. Other (books, magazine, newspaper, all printed matter).	24	6.8

\*\* Multiple answers

Mostly respondents reported more than one source of knowledge. For 76.1% girls television was main source of knowledge, 20.8% reported radio, 12.0% received knowledge from their peers, 6.8% got informed through books magazines, newspaper and printed matter, 8% gained the knowledge from poster and same 8.0% of respondents reported that family members provide information for the same (see Table 4).

### 4. Discussion

Due to changing the social values there is increased premarital sexual activity among unmarried girls (Gupta and Khan, 1996). Further ignorance or misinformation on sex related matters can put sexually active youth at higher risk of sexually transmitted infections including HIV. Young women are biologically more vulnerable to HIV infection than young men- a situation aggravated by their lack of access of information on HIV and even lesser power to exercise control over their sexual lives.

Present study highlights that 73.3% girls had no knowledge about Reproductive Tract Infections while majority had heard of HIV/AIDS, which is similar to observations of National Family Health Survey (NFHS) III done in 2005-06. Shubha and Umakantha (2015) also reported that all students had heard of HIV/AIDS. In this study 73.6% girls had correct knowledge about causative agents of AIDS which is less than what was observed (90%) in a study conducted among PU students of Nepal by Singh S.K. et al. (2005).

Present study shows that 98.3% girls knew the mode of transmission of HIV/AIDS which is similar to the study done among youth aged 15-24 years in rural area of Saurashtra

region of Gujarat, India by Yadav *et al.*(2011) i.e. more than 90% awareness. While Rahman (2009) reported 20% awareness regarding mode of transmission among adults in Savar, Bangladesh.

In this study 14.7% girls reported unprotected sex or sex with multiple partners is one of the major cause of HIV/AIDS. Unprotected sex is the major route of HIV transmission, accounting in total for 89 percent of infections (87 percent heterosexual and 2 percent homosexual). Other routes include parent to child transmission (5 percent), use of infected syringes and needles (2 percent) and use of infected blood and blood products (1 percent) (National AIDS Control Organization 2010c).

Adolescent don't have any outer source of information results poor genital hygiene. Most of the adolescent girls know about HIV but have poor knowledge about STIs, this increases the vulnerability for sexual abuse among adolescent. The important barriers in the utilization of services for adolescents are lack of awareness of parents, stigma to utilize services, economic factors, facility available at faraway places and non-availability of services (Nair *et al.*, 2013). Shylaja (2014) reported that one third of ever married women were aware of RTI/ STI and they gained knowledge through mass media including television, radio, cinema and print media like newspaper, books, magazines wall painting, posters and slogans.

**5. Conclusion:** A little percentage of rural college going girls reported awareness about the reproductive tract infections (RTIs), age of girls, their year of education, marital status and type of family was found significantly associated with the awareness about RTI. A widespread awareness of HIV/AIDS and its mode of transmission were found among respondents. Television, radio and print media was found important source of information followed by friends and family members.

**6. Recommendation:** Create awareness among adolescent as well as their parents and community leaders about the negative health, social and economic consequences of early marriage, HIV/AIDS. It is well known fact that education (literacy) is a tool for empowerment, and reducing inequalities. Education for girls should be promoted.

#### 7. Conflict of Interest: Nil

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