Awareness of HIV/AIDS among primary school pupils in north central region of Nigeria

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Objective: To determine the knowledge of HIV/AIDS among primary school pupils in north central area of Nigeria. Methods: 2000 randomly selected primary school pupils in and around eastern part of Idoma area of Benue state were interviewed using an open–ended questionnaire. Data analysis was done with EPI–INFO 2000. The Chi–square test was used for statistical analysis and the 0.05 level of significance was adopted. Results: A total of 1010 males and 990 females at ages between five and sixteen years were drawn from 10 primary schools in the area. Pupils in the higher classes were more knowledgeable and sex difference was not statistically significant. Certain misconceptions were noted. Conclusions: There is need for health education for all cadres of primary school pupils in the area, which will increase the awareness of the disease.

1. Introduction

Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) is caused by Human immune deficiency virus (HIV)1–4. It has resulted in the greatest public health concern since 1981. AIDS is a global pandemic. HIV is blood borne and commonly transmitted by exchange of body fluids during sexual intercourse, and from mother to child during pregnancy1,2. Children may get the virus from breast feeding, and sharing sharp objects while playing with infected fellows3.

Therefore it can not be an understatement that a good understanding of the disease would go a long way in reducing the transmission of the disease. Primary school pupils need to avoid any contact with potentially infected fluids. The fear of AIDS and its consequences rank number one as the greatest medical anxiety in our population in recent times and as long as there is no specific and effective cure, our main line of defence must remain an educated public3,4.

Therefore, the study is aimed at determining the knowledge of HIV/AIDS among primary school pupils in Idoma community of Benue State, Nigeria, and knowledge about the prevention against the HIV infection.

2. Subjects and methods

Otukpo is the traditional headquarter of Idoma people. It is located in north central part of Nigeria; bounded by Enugu State on the east, Cross River State on the west and Makurdi on the north, Kogi State on the south. It is a local government area with a neighboring local government area called Apa. There are many primary schools in these predominantly populated Idoma local government areas. Ten primary schools in the study was selected by simple random sampling method.

An open–ended questionnaire on personal data and aspects of knowledge of etiology diagnosis, transmission and prevention of HIV/AIDS infection was administered on randomly selected pupils who were willing to participate in the study from ten primary schools in the area. A total of 2000 pupils were interviewed. They were drawn from class 1 to 6. Two hundred pupils were drawn from each school. Five schools each from Otukpo local government area and Apa local government area were selected.

Data entry and analysis were done with the software EPI–INFO 2000. Statistical analysis was done with the Chi–square test and the 0.05 level of significance was adopted.
3. Results

A total of two thousand (2 000) pupils were interviewed. 1 010 (50.5%) were males, while 990 (49.5%) were females, giving male to female ratio of 1:1.

Out of the 2,000 pupils studied, 980 (49%) of them claimed knowledge of HIV/AIDS, among which 320 (33%) were in class 5, and 294 (30%) were in class 6 (Table 1).

The pupils had the knowledge of the disease from their churches (53%), parents (35%) and from their school teachers (10%). Others learnt of HIV/AIDS from public enlightenment campaigns (5%), radio (5%) and television (2%).

The parameters used to assess the knowledge of HIV/AIDS in respondents were 1) Causative agent of HIV/AIDS; 2) Mode of transmission; 3) AIDS has no cure; 4) Manifestation of HIV/AIDS; 5) Preventive/ control measures against HIV infection.

15% of the children had the understanding of the cause of disease and its implications. Only 10% of them know the modes of transmission of HIV infection, 20% of them are aware of the various ways the disease presents, 30% of them know there is no cure for the disease, while 25% of the pupils are aware of the preventive/ control measures (Table 1).

4. Discussion

The study was carried out among primary school pupils in Otukpo area of Benue State. It revealed that a good number of primary school pupils (49%) had been informed about HIV/AIDS by their churches (53%), parents (35%) and from their school teachers (10%). Others learnt of HIV/AIDS from public enlightenment campaigns (5%), radio (5%) and television (2%).

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### Table 1

| Age   | Class | Cause | MOT | CLIN | Cure | Contral | Total |
|-------|-------|-------|-----|------|------|---------|-------|
| 5–<6  | 1     | 4     | 10  | 9    | 8    | 2       | 33 (3%)|
| 6–<7  | 2     | 10    | 11  | 12   | 15   | 7       | 55 (6%)|
| 7–<8  | 3     | 13    | 10  | 20   | 43   | 22      | 108 (11%)|
| 8–<9  | 4     | 20    | 12  | 30   | 58   | 50      | 170 (17%)|
| 9–<12 | 5     | 40    | 25  | 60   | 100  | 95      | 320 (33%)|
| 12–<16| 6     | 60    | 30  | 65   | 70   | 69      | 294 (30%)|

Cause— Number of pupils who had knowledge of the cause of HIV/AIDS; MOT— Number of pupils who had knowledge of the mode of transmission; CLIN— Number of pupils who had knowledge of the clinical presentation; Cure— Number of pupils who had knowledge that there is no cure; Contral— Number of pupils who had knowledge of prevention and control.

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