



SJSM Science

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Issue No 13.
Fall 2013

Awareness and effectiveness of education of HIV/AIDS of teenagers in Bonaire – Dutch Caribbean

According to UNAIDS report on the global AIDS epidemic 2013, approximately 12,000 people became newly infected in the Caribbean in 2012, bringing the total number of people living with HIV/AIDS there to more than 250,000. AIDS claimed an estimated 11,000 lives in 2012.

Those facts again emphasize the importance of the education as the part of the HIV prevention strategy. But is the education really effective?

SJSM students tested the knowledge about AIDS among the teenagers before and after the workshop. And here is what they found:

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Awareness and effectiveness of education of HIV/AIDS of teenagers in Bonaire – Dutch Caribbean



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Introduction

Previous studies regarding AIDS and effects of educating adolescents on the issue have been performed in developed and populous locations such as the United States. Furthermore, in these locations, risk factors and consequences of unprotected sexual intercourse are controlled as well as discussed widely; however, according to CDC's Youth Risk Behavioral Survey (YRBS), the risk for HIV infection is mainly prominent for youth of minority races and ethnicities. Therefore the focus of this study is in Bonaire, a Caribbean island with a small population, where schools do not have educational programs associated with health and sexual education or the schools do not provide teenagers with the educational programs on health and disease prevention, as it is customary in the US and other modern countries. According to research conducted by Dr. Desmalee Holder-Nivens, the rates of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases among the youth in the Caribbean is high. The study also demonstrated that the media constitutes as the major source of sexual and reproductive health education among these teens as opposed to resources such as family and schools (Holder, 2009). Communication concerning principles and viewpoint about sex is an important step in helping adolescents postpone sexual initiation and make accountable decisions about sexual behaviors later in life (CDC HIV/AIDS Fact Sheets, 2008.)

The aim of this research is to test the level of understanding among teenagers in Bonaire, on the subject of AIDS. Then examine the effectiveness of educating teenagers on the subject by comparing the level of understanding before and after a workshop on AIDS was presented to the teenagers by our group. We hypothesize that after a thorough workshop with the teens they will have a better understanding of the transition of AIDS and of how to prevent further escalation of those infected. We also believe that the positive results of this study will help us demonstrate the importance of adapting health education programs in international schools like *Jung Bonaire* and making students more aware of the dangers elicited by having sexual intercourse at an early age.

Methods

In order to determine the level of AIDS awareness among teenagers in Bonaire, Dutch Caribbean, this study chose to focus on high school students from *Jung Bonaire*. The age group of this study was between the ages of 13 to 18 years of age. Data was collected from 52 students (26 male, 23 female) on a pre-workshop survey and from 49 students (27 male, 22) in the post-workshop survey. The study was further focused by making 110 copies of the "HIV teen Survey Questionnaire" that was distributed among the students during the pre-workshop and the post-workshop survey. The survey questions were aimed at assessing the level of knowledge and awareness of AIDS among the Jung Bonaire students. To complete the questionnaire, the students were expected to answer the questions in either a True/False (1-2), Yes/No (1-2), Strongly Agree-Strongly disagree (1-4 scale), I definitely would/I definitely would not (1-4 scale) or Always/Never (1-4 scale) format. There were a total of 23 questions. On the same day, an educational workshop on the topic of AIDS was held among the same participants that took the survey. Further, Post-workshop survey was held 5 days later. Students were given the same survey questionnaire that was given prior to the workshop. All the students completed and returned questionnaire. The aim of this survey was to see the level of knowledge in terms of how much they had actively learned from the workshop regarding AIDS.

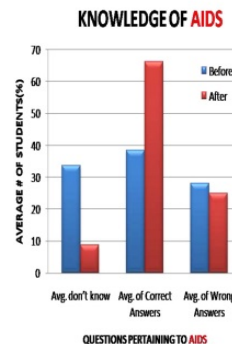
SPSS software was utilized to perform the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test for statistical analysis of the results. In addition, results were entered in Excel program to obtain averages and percentages of the number of students and their responses to the respective questions.



Results

The first set of questions composed of general statements associated with AIDS, and students were asked to identify whether the statement was true, false or they don't know. On average 34% of the students stated that they did not know if the statements were true or false. Results after the workshop was executed showed a significant decrease in the percent of people that did not know the answer to the respective statements; the percentage that did not know the answer was approximately 8.7%.

The second segment of the survey determined if adolescents could talk about sex, AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases with friends, significant other, and adults. Teens were also asked to report if their parents have talked to them about AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases and how comfortable teens felt talking about sex and AIDS with adults. Results obtained after the workshop showed a decrease in the number (7% vs. 9%) of students that stated they definitely could not have a conversation about AIDS with friends, significant other, and adults. The number that stated they can definitely or probably talk increased from an average of 54% to 66% after the workshop. Surprisingly, the percent of students that stated they would be uncomfortable discussing the topic with the parents also decreased greatly (26% vs. 32%).



Conclusions

Based on the results of the study, an increase in the general knowledge of AIDS among teenagers was observed by conducting a workshop for merely two hours. Therefore, we believe that it is important for schools in Bonaire to implement health education programs for students as a means of primary prevention. For the short term benefits, these programs will allow students to become more cautious about having unprotected sexual intercourse and it will raise their understanding about sexually transmitted diseases. Whereas, in the long run the health cost for the community of Bonaire will decrease significantly by reducing the burden of AIDS on health care cost.

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