College Students’ Knowledge, Attitudes, and Testing Behaviors in Regard to HIV/AIDS

A Preliminary Analysis of an Exploratory Study

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Research Question

What are the influences on whether students get tested for HIV and how often?
Research Design

- Quantitative Research
  - Pencil and paper survey

- Qualitative Research
  - Interviews with students
Quantitative Research

- HIV/AIDS is affecting the college-aged population (Youth AIDS 2008).
- Previous studies fail to examine HIV testing behaviors.
- Gain a better understanding of the research field.
- Lay groundwork for future studies.
Methods

- Recruitment of participants
  - Cluster-sampling
  - 30 classes were randomly selected based on general education course list
  - 22 classes agreed to be surveyed
- Surveys (29 items) administered during regular class time
- Resource list was provided
Sample

- 1,009 participants
  - 3 surveys were removed
  - 66% female, 34% male
  - Average age: 19.8; Ranged from 18 to 50
  - 42% freshmen, 32% sophomore, 14% juniors, 12% seniors
Analysis

- Surveys were coded
- Data was inputted into SPSS and analyzed to examine the following possible influences on HIV testing behaviors:
  - Sexual behaviors
  - Interpersonal communication
  - Knowledge
Results: Testing behaviors

- 85% never tested
  - Of sexually active: 81% never tested
- Average times tested: 0.28; Ranged from 0 to 15
  - Of sexually active: 0.35
  - Of those tested: 1.85
- 90% returned to get their results
Results: Testing behaviors

- Reasons for being tested
  - Option at a checkup offered by doctor (52%)
  - Wanted to know HIV/AIDS status, but not because knowingly exposed (36%)

- Reasons for not being tested
  - Just didn’t think at risk (43%)
  - Not knowingly exposed to HIV/AIDS (35%)
  - No chance of contraction (29%)
Results: Sexual Behaviors

- Sexually active: having had vaginal or anal sexual intercourse
- 80% were sexually active
- 76% have had sexual intercourse without a condom
- Average number of partners: 3.16; Ranged from 0 to 100
  - Of sexually active: 3.99
Results: Sexual Behaviors

- Significant correlation between number of partners and times tested ($p < 0.001$)
- Significant relationship between sexual intercourse without a condom and whether or not tested
  - Of those who have had unprotected intercourse, 22% have been tested
  - Of those who have not had unprotected intercourse, 6.5% have been tested
Results: Knowledge

Self-rated knowledge
- 7% very knowledgeable
- 44% knowledgeable
- 49% somewhat knowledgeable
- 0.3% not knowledgeable at all/never heard of it
Results: Knowledge

- Basic knowledge
  - Determined using 9 questions

- Knowledge score
  - Average 8.2 questions correct; Ranged from 3 to 9
  - 34% answered 8 correctly, 48% answered all correctly
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>True</th>
<th>False</th>
<th>Do not know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Can tell if someone has HIV/AIDS by looking at them</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>96.7</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only affects homosexual males, IV drug users, and prostitutes</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>98.3</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everyone who has HIV/AIDS knows it</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>99.5</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cannot contract HIV if on the birth control pill</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>96.4</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condoms are the best protection method for HIV when engaging in vaginal/anal intercourse</td>
<td>83.5</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possible to contract HIV through vaginal sexual intercourse</td>
<td>98.5</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possible to contract HIV through anal sexual intercourse</td>
<td>91.0</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possible to contract HIV through oral sexual contact</td>
<td>68.6</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>18.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results: Knowledge

- Significant relationship between self-rated knowledge and whether or not tested \((p < 0.001)\)
  - 30% of very knowledgeable and 0% of not knowledgeable at all have been tested
- Significant correlation between self-rated and actual knowledge \((p < 0.001)\)
- No significant correlation between actual knowledge score and number of times tested
Results: Interpersonal communication

- Discussion of HIV/AIDS with sexual partners
  - Average number of sexual partners discussed with: 1.14; Ranged from 0 to 50
  - 59% have not discussed it with their most recent sexual partner
Results: Interpersonal communication

- Significant relationship between discussion with most recent partner and whether or not tested ($p < 0.001$)
  - 25% who discussed were tested; 14% of those who haven’t discussed it were tested

- Significant relationship between number of partners discussed and number of times tested ($p < 0.001$)
Results: Other findings

- Reoccurring responses to “open-ended” questions
- When asked:
  - “With how many of your total vaginal or anal sexual partners have you discussed you and your partner’s HIV/AIDS status?”
    - “[Number], but jokingly”
  - “For what reasons have you not been tested for HIV/AIDS?”
    - “Don’t know where to go”
    - “Lazy”
Implications

- Many of the students had not been tested, despite being sexually active
- Need to encourage students to be active in their testing behaviors and discussion of HIV/AIDS with partners
  - Locations of testing sites need to be provided
- Need to determine why there is no relationship between testing behaviors and knowledge
Future Research

- Limitations:
  - Disproportionately females, freshmen, and sophomores
  - Limited to general education classes
  - Only undergraduate students
  - Inclusive of both active and passive (e.g., through blood donation) testing
Reference