

## **ABSTRACT**

### **A Comparison Between Two Groups of Bahamian Females, HIV Positive and HIV Negative Regarding Knowledge, Attitude, Belief and Practices and Behaviour Change**

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HIV is here and will probably be with us for as long as we believe and act as though "It won't or can't happen to me", or "I can't get it".

This study compares 61 HIV infected females (HIV cases) with 61 non-HIV infected females (reference group). The cases and the reference group were matched using variables of date of birth, political constituency and attending a Ministry of Health clinic. The field work was conducted during February 1992 and March 1992 through structured interviews.

Findings highlighted that females who were single and who had left school before reaching the age of 14 years, were more likely to become HIV infected than those who were married or in a common-law relationship and who had left school after reaching 14 years. Out of the HIV cases 48 (78%) had left school before reaching the age of 14 years and 39 (64%) of these females were single. In comparison with the reference group, 53 (87%) of these females left school after reaching 14 years and 31 (51%) were single.

Knowledge scores of the reference group were higher than those of the cases. However, the distribution of knowledge scores of the HIV cases

were closer to the mean than the reference group indicating that, as individuals, more of the HIV cases scored better than those in the reference group. The mean knowledge scores for the combined group was 15.3. For the HIV cases the mean knowledge score was 14.1 and for the reference group the mean knowledge score was 17.1.

Even though the knowledge scores were high there were deficits in specific knowledge areas in both groups. More than 61% of the HIV cases were unaware that a women who was pregnant could pass the virus onto the foetus. Only 40% of the reference group knew that there was no cure for AIDS. The majority of the HIV cases and reference group knew that AIDS/HIV was the most serious sexually transmitted disease in the country today.

The reference group was more aware of the methods of transmission and prevention of HIV infection as well as the behaviours to prevent HIV infection than the HIV cases.

A positive attitude to protecting their partners and the community was demonstrated by the HIV cases. The reference group demonstrated a slightly negative attitude to protecting their partners and the community. Both groups believed that an individual could contribute to preventing HIV infection.