

Abstract

Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices of Primary Care Physicians with Regards to the Skin Manifestations of HIV Disease.

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BACKGROUND AND DESIGN: the knowledge, attitudes and practices of physicians in primary health care to the skin manifestations of HIV disease was determined. A cross sectional survey using self administered questionnaires was carried out on physicians in primary health care in the private and public sector of the southeast region of the island. These cases were then compared with cases of HIV disease diagnosed in the Dermatology Clinic at the KPH over the period 1997-2001.

RESULTS: 92.6% of the physicians responded to the questionnaire, the majority perceiving themselves to have a fair knowledge of the skin manifestations of HIV disease. They were found to correctly associate tinea corporis, oral candidiasis, seborrheic dermatitis and papular pruritic eruption with HIV disease; but they did not associate herpes zoster with this condition, and several cases of seborrheic dermatitis and papular pruritic eruption were not being recognized. The average time to referral for the patients not diagnosed in primary care was 7.4 months. The physicians acknowledged the need for continuing education. The physicians

demonstrated a positive and professional attitude to their HIV positive patients, irrespective of the risk group to which they belong.

CONCLUSIONS: Physicians in primary care have a fair knowledge of the skin conditions of HIV disease, but need to have a high index of suspicion and diagnose patients at an earlier stage of the disease. This can be improved by designing programmes of continuing medical education to keep primary care physicians abreast of the presenting manifestations of HIV disease. The doctors have a professional attitude towards their patients, irrespective the risk group to which they belong in contrast with the general population, which still exhibits very negative attitudes towards certain risk groups.