

Abstract

Factors governing the contraction of sexually transmitted diseases

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As the Aids/HIV epidemic spreads more and more women are becoming infected. Because of the status of women in many regions of the world, women are more at risk.

There is also the female:male biological dimension to the disease i.e. research shows that a woman because of her physique, runs a risk of being infected from each sexual contact with an infected partner of the opposite sex that is estimated to be 2-2.5 times greater than the risk for a man. Also, the risk of transmission from an infected woman to her child during pregnancy or delivery is estimated to be between 25 & 50%. These factors are not related per se to the status of women but when combined with status issues it means that women are at greater risk of being infected.

When sexual contact occurs, the chance that a woman will be able to opt for safe sex is determined to a considerable extent by such factors as -:

- level of education
- degree of economic independence

The worsening world economic scene means that many informed females because they are financially and emotionally dependent on the male find it harder and harder to make a "bread" when they perceive that their sexual relationship puts them at risk for Aids/HIV infection.

Recent research by the Health Promotion Unit of the Global Programme on Aids and Aidscom indicate that consistent behavioural change can only be understood by looking beyond knowledge, attitudes and motivation to psychological characteristics of the individual such as assertiveness, rationality and social applications.

In this study each woman is characterized as having internal or external locus of control depending on her beliefs about -:

1. the importance of chance and luck in determining what happens to her
2. the importance of powerful others and,
3. the extent to which she believes she has control over her own life.

The aim is to describe the sense of personal control each women has over her life in general as well as to describe the control each woman has in her sexual relationship and see how this relates to certain health behaviours for example use or non-use of family planning

and acquisition or non-acquisition of Std's and the possible factors influencing the above.

The results indicate that the root of poor control in sexual relationship has its base in the low status of women which is dependent on economics mainly as well as socio cultural factors.