

ABSTRACT

KNOWLEDGE AND RISK FACTORS REGARDING HIV/AIDS AMONG ADOLESCENTS 12 – 19 YEARS AT HIGH SCHOOLS IN NORTHERN MANCHESTER

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A cross-sectional study was conducted among students of two rural high schools in northern Manchester. The study sought to identify the knowledge and risk factors of HIV/AIDS among adolescents 12 – 19 years old. The study was conducted February to March 2003.

Stratified random sampling method was utilized to select two hundred (200) students from a sampling frame of four thousand and sixty-two (4062) students. One hundred and seventy-six respondents giving a response rate of 88% filled out the self-administered questionnaire.

The findings from the study revealed that majority of the respondents were knowledgeable about the facts, modes of transmission and prevention of HIV/AIDS. Despite participants high level of knowledge, approximately 30% of respondents were sexually active. Forced sex was identified by 29% of respondents who were sexually active.

The mean age of sexual initiation was 12 years for boys and 15 years for girls.

Boys practised condom use more regularly than girls.

Alcohol was the main substance that was abused by respondents.

Respondents main source of information regarding sexual health and HIV/AIDS was friends followed by television.

Less than 10% respondents perceived themselves at risk for HIV/AIDS despite the fact that 30% were sexually active, 40% had multiple sex partners and 56.5% females did not use condoms.

It was evident that there is need for a comprehensive school health programme targeting adolescents to recognize their susceptibility to HIV infection, the severity of the problem and the benefits of resorting to a more responsible sexual behaviour. A multi-sectoral approach will be important in this endeavor.

Keywords: Etta Rowe-Watson; Adolescents; Knowledge; Risk Factors; HIV/AIDS