

A STUDY OF THE KNOWLEDGE, AWARENESS, PERCEPTIONS AND BELIEFS (KAPB) ON HIV/AIDS OF TEENAGERS IN THE LOWER EAST COAST DEMERARA (GUYANA)

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to investigate the Knowledge, Awareness, Perceptions and Beliefs (KAPB) of teenagers aged between 15 and 19 living on the Lower East Coast of Demerara (Cummings Lodge to Mon Repos) on HIV/AIDS. Randomly selected sixty Lower East Coast of Demerara teenagers were interviewed using a four page questionnaire and twenty one questions. The questionnaire was selected from the module on HIV/AIDS in the UNICEF End Decade Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS).

In response to a planned 2000 World Summit for Children, the United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF) developed the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey as a useful tool for collecting data on primarily women and children. The following organizations worked together to develop the first MICS - UNICEF, World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Statistics Division, the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Five rounds of MICS were done globally in 1995, 2000, 2006, 2009 and 2012 – 2014.

The results are presented in a manner that is consistent with UNICEF End Decade MICS Model Report. The results of the study will summarize key findings associated with teenagers aged between 15 and 19 living on the Lower East Coast of Demerara knowledge of the modes transmission of HIV/AIDS from mother to child, discriminatory attitudes towards people living with HIV/AIDS, knowledge on three means of preventing HIV transmission, their beliefs/misconceptions about HIV transmission. This study will calculate the percentage of teenagers who have ‘sufficient knowledge’ of HIV/AIDS transmission.

Given that Guyana has a high rate of teenage pregnancy. It is important that these issues be examined. This study is particularly relevant at this time when HIV/AIDS has emerged as an important health issue.

INTRODUCTION

Guyana has a high rate of teenage pregnancy (see table 1). It is important to measure how much knowledge teenagers have on how AIDS is transmitted and how to prevent transmission of AIDS. Data has been collected on Guyana on this but because of the nature of Guyana settlement patterns, disaggregated data for regions (Guyana is divided into ten regions) and sub-regions is not readily available. This study focuses on Knowledge, Awareness, Perceptions and Beliefs (KAPB) on HIV/AIDS of teenagers from Cummings Lodge to Mon Repos in the lower East Coast Demerara (Guyana).

Table 1: Adolescent birth rate per 1000 women aged 15 to 19, Caricom Countries, 1991/2010

Country	Adolescent birth rate per 1000 women aged 15 to 19, 1991/2010
Guyana	97
Belize	90
Dominica	83
Jamaica	72
Haiti	69
Suriname	66
Barbados	50
Saint Lucia	49
Bahamas	41
Trinidad and Tobago	33

Source: United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) State of the World Population, 2013

MULTIPLE INDICATOR CLUSTER SURVEY (MICS)

In response to a planned 2000 World Summit for Children, the United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF) developed the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) as a useful tool for collecting data on primarily women and children. The following organizations worked together to develop the first MICS - UNICEF, World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Statistics Division, the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Five rounds of MICS were done globally in 1995, 2000, 2006, 2009 and 2012 – 2014.

GUYANA MICS

The MICS survey was first implemented in Guyana in 2000 that produced baseline data, this survey was funded by UNICEF. Below are the indicators on HIV/AIDS from this survey, women aged 15-49 were interviewed.

Indicators	World Summit for Children Indicators	Percentage
Knowledge of preventing HIV/AIDS	Proportion of women who correctly state the three main ways of avoiding HIV infection	42.8 percent
Knowledge of misconceptions of HIV/AIDS	Proportion of women who correctly identify 3 misconceptions about HIV/AIDS infection	45.1 percent
Knowledge of mother to child transmission	Proportion of women who correctly identify means of transmission of HIV from mother to child	42.3 percent
Attitude to people with HIV/AIDS	Proportion of women expressing a discriminatory attitude towards people with HIV/AIDS	39.2 percent
Women who know where to get tested for HIV	Proportion of women who know where to get a HIV test	69.0 percent
Women who have been tested for HIV	Proportion of women who have been tested for HIV	15.7 percent

Source: Guyana MICS Report, Bureau of Statistics (Guyana), July 2001

A follow up MICS survey was done in Guyana in 2006.

SAMPLE

Sixty respondents in the Lower East Coast Region (Cummings Lodge to Mon Repos) of Guyana were randomly selected and interviewed during November 2013 using a four page questionnaire, the questionnaire was the HIV/AIDS module of the end decade MICS Survey. The method of data collection was face-to-face interviewing using a trained interviewer supervised by an experienced supervisor. The 60 respondents who were interviewed were from the teenage group (between 15-19 years).

Forty three percent of the sample was males while 53 percent of the sample was females. 47 percent of the sample was Indo-Guyanese, 43 percent were Afro-Guyanese and 10 percent were "Others", this is similar to the population of the Lower East Coast Demerara. Ninety seven

percent of the sample completed secondary education while 3 percent completed post secondary education. Sixty three percent of the sample was aged 15-17 while 37 percent were aged 18-19.

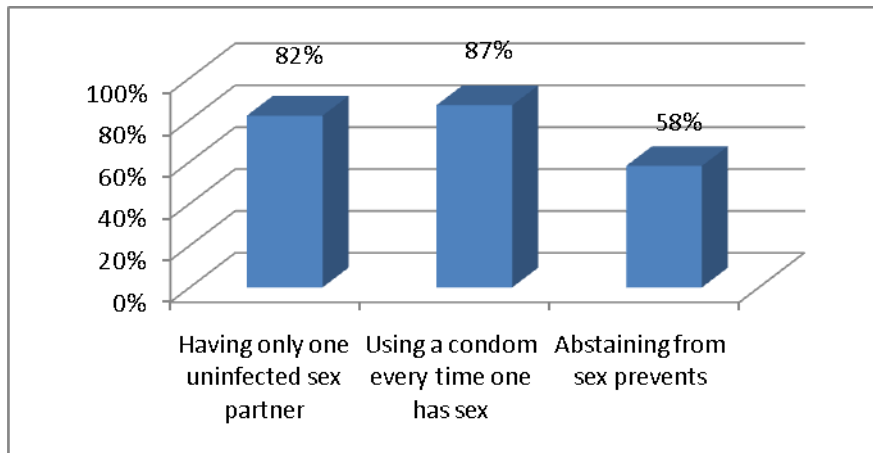
AIDS KNOWLEDGE

It is important to promote accurate knowledge of how AIDS is transmitted and how to prevent transmission. Equally important is collecting scientific data to determine the level of knowledge and misconceptions on HIV/AIDS.

Among the 60 persons aged 15-19 interviewed in the Lower East Coast of Demerara (Guyana), 100 percent have ever heard of AIDS, this percentage is very high.

Persons aged 15-19 interviewed in the Lower East Coast of Demerara were read several statements about means of HIV/AIDS transmission and asked to state whether they believed the statements were true. Eighty Two percent believe that having only one uninfected sex partner can prevent HIV transmission. Eighty Seven percent believe that using a condom every time one has sex can prevent HIV transmission and 58 percent agreed that abstaining from sex prevents HIV transmission. See Figure 1. Overall, 40 percent knew all three ways and 90 percent were aware of at least one of the means of preventing transmission.

Figure 1: Percentage of persons aged 15-19 who have knowledge of HIV/AIDS transmission



Differences across gender is not particularly large; the percentage of women who know all three means is 44 percent among 15-19 year olds whereas it was 36 percent for males aged 15 to 19 years old. Also, age is a very important factor in AIDS knowledge. The percentage who knows all three means of preventing transmission is more than two times greater among persons aged 15-17 years old compared to persons aged 18-19 years old.

Eighty four percent of persons aged 15–19 correctly stated that AIDS can't be transmitted by supernatural means whereas 60 percent stated that AIDS can't be spread by mosquito bites. More than eight in ten persons aged 15–19 correctly believe that a healthy looking person can be infected. Males aged 15–19 are more likely to believe misconceptions about AIDS transmission than females aged 15–19. Persons aged 18–19 are more likely to recognize all three misconceptions than persons aged 15- 17. Still, less than half (42 percent) of the persons aged 15–17 correctly identified all three misconceptions.

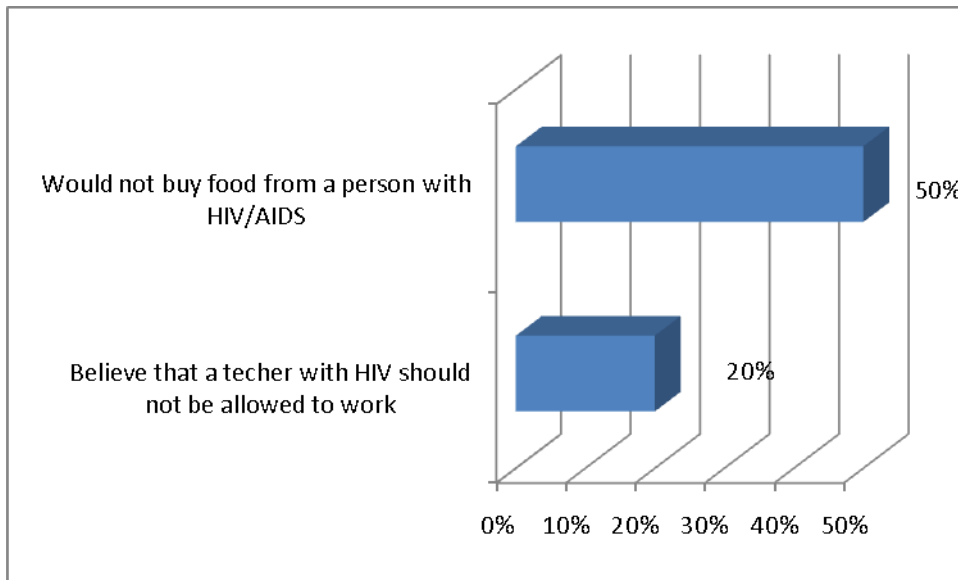
Ninety percent of persons aged 15–19 know that AIDS can be transmitted from mother to child. When asked specifically about the mechanisms through which mother to child transmission can take place, 78 percent said that transmission during pregnancy was possible, only 46 percent said that transmission at delivery was possible, and 67 percent agreed that AIDS can be transmitted through breast milk. Females aged 15–19 are more likely to know all three modes of transmission than males aged 15–19. Persons aged 15–17 are more likely to know all three modes of transmission than persons aged 18–19. Slightly more than one in five persons aged 15–19 knew all three modes of transmission.

ATTITUDES TO PERSONS LIVING WITH HIV/AIDS

This survey also attempted to measure discriminatory attitudes towards people living with HIV/AIDS. The respondents were asked whether they agreed with two questions. The first asked whether a teacher who has the AIDS virus but is not sick should be allowed to continue teaching in school. The second question asked whether the respondent would buy food from a shopkeeper or food seller who the respondent knew to be infected with AIDS. .

One fifth of the respondents believe that a teacher with HIV/AIDS should not be allowed to work. This percentage is higher with the persons aged 15–17 at 21 percent and lowest with persons aged 18–19 at 9 percent. Similar proportions of male and female respondents expressed this discriminatory attitude. Fifty percent of persons aged 15–19 years old would not buy food from a person infected with AIDS. See Figure 2. This measure shows a similar gender pattern as with the first question. Male and female respondents express a similar discriminatory attitude on this question. However, 68 percent of persons aged 15-17 and 18 percent of persons aged 18-19 express a similar discriminatory attitude on this question. Overall, 52 percent of respondents agree with at least one of the discriminatory statements. The proportions of male respondents and female respondents agreeing with at least one of the discriminatory statements is similar but 71 percent of persons aged 15–17 agree with at least one of the discriminatory statements compared with 18 percent of persons aged 18–19.

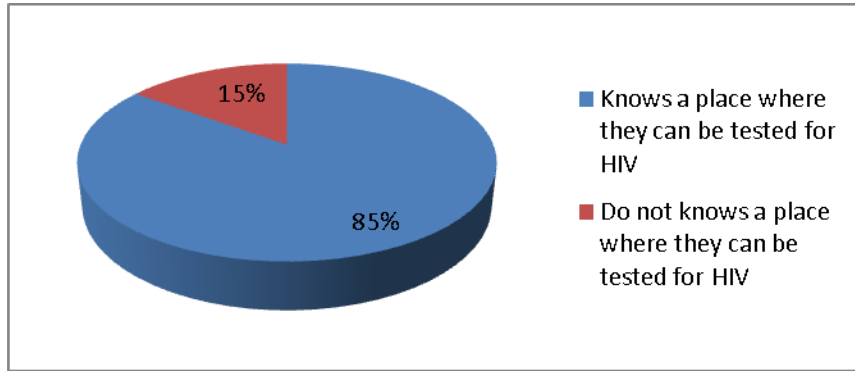
Figure 2: Percentage of persons aged 15-19 who express a discriminatory attitude towards people living with HIV/AIDS



AIDS TESTING

Voluntary testing for AIDS is important as this allows persons to know their HIV Status and those infected could then seek counseling and treatment. Respondents were asked if they were ever tested for HIV, if they have been tested were they told the results and if they know of a place where HIV tests are done.

Figure 3: Percentage of persons aged 15-19 who know a place to get tested for AIDS



Eighty five percent of respondents know a place to get tested for AIDS. See figure 3 Respondents aged 15-17 were more likely to know a place, compared to those aged 18-19. Eighty two percent of males aged 15-19 years old know of a place to get tested compared to 88 percent of females aged 15-19 years old.

Twenty five percent of respondents have been tested for AIDS. This percentage is highest for respondents aged 18-19 at 32 percent, lowest for respondents aged 15-17 and males aged 15-19 at 21 percent and 28 percent for females aged 15-19.

The majority of respondents who have been tested were told the result (87 percent), however, there is some variation across gender. All males aged 15-19 who were tested were told their results while the corresponding results for females aged 15-19 was 78%. There was little variation across gender. Persons aged 15-17 are the least likely of any age group to have been tested and least likely to know the result

CONCLUSION

All respondents have heard of HIV/AIDS. Ninety percent of persons aged 15-19 know that AIDS can be transmitted from mother to child. Slightly more than one in five persons aged 15-19 years old knew all three modes of transmission - during pregnancy, at delivery or through breast milk.

This survey also attempted to measure discriminatory attitudes towards people living with HIV/AIDS. One fifth of the respondents believe that a teacher with HIV/AIDS should not be allowed to work and 50 percent of persons aged 15-19 would not buy food from a person infected with AIDS.

Eighty five percent of respondents know a place to get tested for AIDS, 25 percent of respondents have been tested for AIDS and 87 percent who have been tested were told the result.

This study collects data on respondent's knowledge on three means of preventing HIV transmission - having on faithful uninfected partner, using a condom every time, and abstaining from sex. 42 percent of persons aged 15-19 knows all three ways. This study also collect data on

respondents who can correctly identified all three misconceptions about HIV transmission – that HIV can be transmitted through supernatural means, that it can be transmitted through mosquito bites, and that a healthy looking person cannot be infected. Forty percent of persons aged 15-19 correctly identified these misconceptions. Finally, the percentage of persons aged 15-19 who have ‘sufficient knowledge’ of HIV/AIDS transmission’. These are respondents who know all three ways of preventing HIV transmission and correctly identified all three misconceptions. Only 22 percent of persons aged 15-19 had have ‘sufficient knowledge’ of HIV/AIDS transmission’. Given that Guyana has a teenage pregnancy rate of 97 per 1000 women, this is a source of concern.

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