A Study on Knowledge, Attitude and Practices of Truck drivers regarding HIV/AIDS

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ABSTRACT

Objectives: To study the knowledge, attitude and practices of truck drivers regarding HIV/AIDS and to find out the prevalence of unsafe sexual practices in truck drivers

Methods: This study was conducted from at 4 districts of Maharashtra namely Aurangabad, Parbhani, Chandrapur and Gadchiroli. Total 850 truck drivers were interviewed at octroi check posts with pretested questionnaire.

Results: 404(47.52 %) truck drivers were aware about HIV and heterosexual route as mode of transmission but knowledge about other routes was lower. Mass media contributed as a source of information to 486(57.17%) truck drivers. Misconceptions like transmission of HIV by sharing meals, sharing toilet were high. 225(26.47%) truck drivers had sex exposure with the commercial sex workers. 334(39.24%) had used condom during sex.

Conclusions: Truck drivers are at greater risk of contracting HIV/AIDS and have little or no knowledge of AIDS and its spread.

Keywords: Truck drivers, HIV/AIDS, Sexual behaviour, Misconceptions, HIV transmission.

Short Title: A KAP Study of Truck drivers regarding HIV/AIDS

INTRODUCTION

The epidemic of HIV/AIDS is the stark reality and a major challenge nowadays. It has posed a real threat to the existence of mankind. Lack of knowledge and social taboos related to sex issues are the major contributing factors for the spread of HIV/AIDS.1 Despite sustained efforts, both awareness and preventive measures have remained low in most of the north
eastern states of India. Certain occupants like truck drivers being away from their home for long period and their occupation being migratory in nature tend to have multiple sex partners and have relationship with commercial sex workers. Thus they form one of the high risk groups for AIDS.

This study is carried out to study the knowledge, attitude and practices of truck drivers regarding HIV/AIDS and to find out the prevalence of unsafe sexual practices in truck drivers so that Information, Education and Communication package can be formulated.

MATERIAL & METHODS

This study was conducted from 1st Jan to 31st May 2007 at four districts of Maharashtra namely Aurangabad, Parbani, Chandrapur and Gadchiroli with involvement of NGOs working with Adult Education Bureau of Govt. of Maharashtra.

Investigators were well trained and informed about the purpose of study and their role. Pretested (pilot study was done on 50 truck drivers) questionnaire was used. Interviews were taken at octroi check post at Municipal Corporation where truck drivers stop for a considerable period. Permission was sought from Corporation authorities. A written informed consent was taken from each truck driver. Total 850 truck drivers were interviewed by two teams. Each team consisted of two trained interviewers. Each interview took about 45 minutes. Data entry and analysis was done with the help of Epi-info statistical software.

RESULTS

Out of total 850 truck drivers 564(66.35 %) were from Maharashtra followed by Andhra Pradesh 127(14.94%), Gujarat 31(3.6%), Madhya Pradesh 38(4.47%), Rajasthan 33(3.38 %). Truck drivers from 20 states were included in the study. Duration of tour at a stretch was more than 8 days in more than 82% truck drivers.

113(13.29 %) had studied less than 4th standard, 634(74.58 %) between 5th standard to 10th standard and rest (13.10%) beyond 10th standard

569(66.94 %) were married.308 (36.23%) were in profession since last 6 to 10 years, 266(31.29%) since 0 to 5 years and 276(32.47%) with more than 10 years of experience

Information about HIV/AIDS

404(47.52 %) truck drivers knew about HIV/AIDS, rest (52.48 %) had incorrect information or were not in a position to explain it. Mass media contributed as a source of information to 486(57.17 %) truck drivers.
505(59.41%) truck drivers feel that possibility of getting AIDS increases due to already existing STDs. 668(78.58%) truck drivers believe for getting diagnosed to have AIDS they must go to hospitals whereas 58 wish to go to traditional hakims, quacks. 523(61.52%) truck drivers know that condom can be used to protect themselves from AIDS. 31 truck drivers told that there is a treatment for HIV-AIDS.

229(26.94%) truck drivers were habituated to tobacco chewing, 373(43.88%) to smoking, 192(22.58%) to drinking alcohol, 225(26.47%) to Gutkha and 80(9.41%) to opium and other drugs.

**Sexual behaviour of Truck drivers**

Only 20.70% feel that the prevalence of having multiple sex partners is less than 25% in truck drivers. 225(26.47%) truck drivers told that they had sex with the commercial sex workers. When asked about use of condom during sex, 334(39.24%) told that they had used it whereas 460 told they do not use it. 54 of truck drivers told that there are homosexual relations between driver and cleaners.

**DISCUSSION**

This study was conducted to find out the knowledge, attitude and practices of truck drivers regarding HIV/ AIDS. National AIDS Control Policy II (1999) is to provide interventions to change behaviour especially among high risk groups.

**Awareness about HIV/AIDS**

It was found that though there is a knowledge gain in about 50% sample, rest of the 50% still carries myths and misconceptions about HIV which is reflected in their behaviour.

But the knowledge about the modes of transmission that is through infected blood, syringes and needles, homosexual partners was inadequate. This could be because more stress is given on certain high risk behaviour like unsafe sex with commercial sex worker during education campaign.

In our study certain misconceptions like sharing meals & toilet, nursing care were distinctly present among truck drivers which can further lead to discrimination of AIDS patient in society. Similar results were found in a study conducted by Dibyojyoti Bhattacharjee et al. 4

In our study, Mass media (57.16%) played an important role in spreading the message about HIV/AIDS, while in a study conducted by Chaturvedi et al., the mass media was the source of knowledge for 67% truck drivers. 5
Knowledge of protracting HIV due to already existing STI was shown by 59.41% drivers. Only 18% drivers were having knowledge about STI in a study conducted by Chaturvedi et al.\(^5\)

26.47% had sex with the commercial sex workers. Chaturvedi et al have reported that 57% had sexual intercourse with commercial sex workers.\(^5\) Bansal RK in 1995 reported that 88.6% had visited commercial sex workers.\(^6\) Manjunath JV et al in their study in 2000 found that 66% of truck drivers had visited commercial sex workers.\(^7\)

It was seen that around 82% drivers in our study travel for a duration of more than 8 days stretch. It was a significant number because travel of so much duration decreases opportunities for satisfying sexual needs from his spouse and may lead to increased exposure to multiple sex partners or commercial sex workers.

668(78.58%) truck drivers believe for getting diagnosed to have AIDS they must go to hospitals whereas 58 wish to go to traditional hakims, quacks. This is a matter of concern in view of the fact that Government has provided free of cost facility of diagnosis of HIV/AIDS in all district hospitals.

31(3.64%) truck drivers told that there is a treatment for HIV-AIDS. This fact the majority of drivers are unaware about the availability of treatment for HIV/AIDS.

229(26.94%) truck drivers were habituated to tobacco chewing, 373(43.88%) to smoking, 192(22.58%) to drinking alcohol, 225(26.47%) to Gutkha and 80(9.41%) to opium and other drugs. This data again is more important because these addictions increase the irresponsible behaviour on and off the road.

**CONCLUSION**

It is evident that truck drivers are at greater risk of contracting HIV/AIDS. It is also clear that they are indulging in unsafe sexual practices. Most of them have little or no knowledge of AIDS and its spread. Use of condom is less prevalent. Hence it is recommended that an effective campaign is very much required for the truck drivers which will take in account all the above points of concern. Changing sexual behaviour of truck drivers is of paramount importance to protect these drivers as well as has a major impact on spread of HIV infection. Though they have targeted by IEC campaigns there still exist major lacunae in their sexual behaviour as brought about by this study.

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REFERENCES


Table1: Awareness about transmission of HIV/AIDS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Route of transmission</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Multiple sexual partners</td>
<td>404</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infected blood</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>27.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syringes and needles</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>27.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homosexual partners</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>31.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother to child</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>46.78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(n=404)

All 404 truck drivers know that HIV-AIDS can be contracted by having sex with multiple partners, 112 (27.72 %) of them know that it spreads through infected blood. 110(27.22 %) know about infected syringe and needle as a mode of transmission, 189(46.78 %) know about
mother to child transmission in uterus and 128(31.68 %) know about spread through homosexual relationship.

Table 2: Misconceptions about HIV Transmission

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Misconception</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shaking hands</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sitting next to patient</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>4.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing meals</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>13.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing toilet</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing care</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>10.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mosquito bite</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>11.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swimming</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(n=404)

13(3.21 %) drivers feel that HIV-AIDS spreads by shaking hands with the patient of AIDS, by sitting next to patient 18(4.45 %), by sharing meals 53(13.11 %), by sharing toilet 50(12.5 %), by nursing care 44(10.89 %), by mosquito bite 48(11.88 %) and by swimming 4( 0.9 %).