



College Students' Knowledge, Attitudes, and Testing Behaviors in Regard to HIV/AIDS

A Preliminary Analysis of
an Exploratory Study

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Research Question

- What are the influences on whether students get tested for HIV and how often?



Research Design

- Quantitative Research
 - Pencil and paper survey
- Qualitative Research
 - Interviews with students



Quantitative Research

- HIV/AIDS is affecting the college-aged population (Youth AIDS 2008).
- Previous studies fail to examine HIV testing behaviors
- Gain a better understanding of the research field
- Lay groundwork for future studies



Methods

- Recruitment of participants
 - Cluster-sampling
 - 30 classes were randomly selected based on general education course list
 - 22 classes agreed to be surveyed
- Surveys (29 items) administered during regular class time
- Resource list was provided



Sample

- 1,009 participants
 - 3 surveys were removed
 - 66% female, 34% male
 - Average age: 19.8; Ranged from 18 to 50
 - 42% freshmen, 32% sophomore, 14% juniors, 12% seniors



Analysis

- Surveys were coded
- Data was inputted into SPSS and analyzed to examine the following possible influences on HIV testing behaviors:
 - Sexual behaviors
 - Interpersonal communication
 - Knowledge



Results: Testing behaviors

- 85% never tested
 - Of sexually active: 81% never tested
- Average times tested: 0.28; Ranged from 0 to 15
 - Of sexually active: 0.35
 - Of those tested: 1.85
- 90% returned to get their results



Results: Testing behaviors

- Reasons for being tested
 - Option at a checkup offered by doctor (52%)
 - Wanted to know HIV/AIDS status, but not because knowingly exposed (36%)

- Reasons for *not* being tested
 - Just didn't think at risk (43%)
 - Not knowingly exposed to HIV/AIDS (35%)
 - No chance of contraction (29%)



Results: Sexual Behaviors

- Sexually active: having had vaginal or anal sexual intercourse
- 80% were sexually active
- 76% have had sexual intercourse without a condom
- Average number of partners: 3.16; Ranged from 0 to 100
 - Of sexually active: 3.99



Results: Sexual Behaviors

- Significant correlation between number of partners and times tested ($p < 0.001$)
- Significant relationship between sexual intercourse without a condom and whether or not tested
 - Of those who have had unprotected intercourse, 22% have been tested
 - Of those who have not had unprotected intercourse, 6.5% have been tested



Results: Knowledge

- Self-rated knowledge
 - 7% very knowledgeable
 - 44% knowledgeable
 - 49% somewhat knowledgeable
 - 0.3% not knowledgeable at all/never heard of it



Results: Knowledge

- Basic knowledge
 - Determined using 9 questions
- Knowledge score
 - Average 8.2 questions correct; Ranged from 3 to 9
 - 34% answered 8 correctly, 48% answered all correctly

Responses to Questions Regarding Knowledge (Percentages)

	True	False	Do not know
Can tell if someone has HIV/AIDS by looking at them	0.8	96.7	2.4
Only affects homosexual males, IV drug users, and prostitutes	1.1	98.3	0.6
Everyone who has HIV/AIDS knows it	0.3	99.5	0.2
Cannot contract HIV if on the birth control pill	1.3	96.4	2.3
Condoms are the best protection method for HIV when engaging in vaginal/anal intercourse	83.5	11.1	5.4
Possible to contract HIV through vaginal sexual intercourse	98.5	0.6	0.9
Possible to contract HIV through anal sexual intercourse	91.0	1.3	7.7
Possible to contract HIV through oral sexual contact	68.6	12.3	18.9



Results: Knowledge

- Significant relationship between self-rated knowledge and whether or not tested ($p < 0.001$)
 - 30% of very knowledgeable and 0% of not knowledgeable at all have been tested
- Significant correlation between self-rated and actual knowledge ($p < 0.001$)
- No significant correlation between actual knowledge score and number of times tested



Results: Interpersonal communication

- Discussion of HIV/AIDS with sexual partners
 - Average number of sexual partners discussed with: 1.14; Ranged from 0 to 50
 - 59% have not discussed it with their most recent sexual partner



Results: Interpersonal communication

- Significant relationship between discussion with most recent partner and whether or not tested ($p < 0.001$)
 - 25% who discussed were tested; 14% of those who haven't discussed it were tested
- Significant relationship between number of partners discussed and number of times tested ($p < 0.001$)



Results: Other findings

- Reoccurring responses to “open-ended” questions
- When asked:
 - “With how many of your *total* vaginal or anal sexual partners have you discussed you and your partner’s HIV/AIDS status?”
 - “[Number], but jokingly”
 - “For what reasons have you not been tested for HIV/AIDS?”
 - “Don’t know where to go”
 - “Lazy”



Implications

- Many of the students had not been tested, despite being sexually active
- Need to encourage students to be active in their testing behaviors and discussion of HIV/AIDS with partners
 - Locations of testing sites need to be provided
- Need to determine why there is no relationship between testing behaviors and knowledge



Future Research

■ Limitations:

- Disproportionately females, freshmen, and sophomores
- Limited to general education classes
- Only undergraduate students
- Inclusive of both active and passive (e.g., through blood donation) testing



Reference

Youth Aids. “HIV/AIDS Statistics.” Retrieved April 24, 2008.
(http://projects.psi.org/site/PageServer?page name=Statistics_nr).