

Sociological Research

Studies completed:

Gender differences in perceived health related quality of life among persons living with HIV

Background:

In the era of HIV/AIDS and in the context of the developing world HIV/AIDS has led to a pandemic. HIV antiretroviral drugs are inaccessible and unaffordable and the only choice that health care providers have is to work towards improving the quality of life of individuals, as long as they live with this dreaded disease.

Aim:

To find out the differences in the quality of life perceived by women and men living with HIV/AIDS.

Methods:

The study population included a cohort of 203 seropositive individuals, 102 women and 101 men, attending the Sexually Transmitted Disease (STD) out patient clinic of the Government General Hospital and the TRC. The WHOQOL-BREF scale was used to assess the quality of life.

Results:

The findings from this study revealed that men reported a poor quality of life in the psychological domain ($p < 0.01$) while women in the sociological domain ($p = 0.03$). The stage of illness did not seem to influence quality of life among women and men.

Conclusion:

The findings emphasize the need for health providers to assess the QOL among people living

with HIV/AIDS. This information would be helpful in planning effective intervention strategies for men and women living with HIV/AIDS in order to be ensured of a quality of life.

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Studies in progress:

Stress and coping strategy of women living with HIV/AIDS in relation to their marital status

Background:

Infection rates of HIV are becoming higher in women than men especially in the developing world. Studies have documented an increase of HIV among monogamous married women. Many women have become widows at a very early age losing their husbands to AIDS and having to look after the orphans on their own. Studies have also documented that individuals living with HIV/AIDS undergo enormous amounts of psychological stress. There is dearth of information from India on stress and coping strategies of women living with HIV/AIDS. It is against this background that this study was planned.

Aim:

1. To assess the stress experienced by women living with HIV/AIDS in relation to the marital status.
2. To evaluate the coping strategies adopted in order to cope with the stress.

Methods:

The respondents are recruited from a cohort of seropositive women patients attending the TRC Madurai unit between January 2004 to December 2004. Patients who are willing to participate in the study and give their informed consent are considered for the study. A semi structured interview schedule is being used to collect socio-demographic information. The Jalowiec & Powers coping scale, Dr Latha stress questionnaire and the WHOQOL-BREF scale was used to measure stress, coping and quality of life. So far 80 patients of whom 40 were widows have been interviewed.

The findings would help in innovating effective intervention strategies to help women living with HIV/AIDS cope with the disease and have a better quality of life.

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A study on stigma related to tuberculosis among patients and community

Background:

Stigma associated with TB among patients, health providers and the community is an impediment in the control of tuberculosis. The health seeking behavior of patients can be influenced because of stigma. There is lack of documented information on stigma from south India. This study focuses on stigma related to TB in rural and urban areas in south India.

Aims:

To assess the

1. Stigma experienced by the TB patients
2. Community perception on stigma related to TB

Methods:

This study was conducted in two TB units (TUs), one in Kancheepuram (rural) and another in Chennai (urban), Tamil Nadu. Two hundred and seventy six patients registered during January - March 2004 formed the study population. The patients who were willing to participate in the study and give their informed consent were interviewed using a semi-structured interview schedule. In addition, Focus Group Discussions (FGD) was conducted among the DOT Providers and community.

The data collection has been complete and analysis in progress. Of the 276 patients, 110 were from rural and 166 from urban areas. Seventy three percent of the rural and 66% of urban respondents were males. The focus group discussions among the providers revealed that stigma was present more among female patients as compared to males. Patients were reluctant to disclose the diagnosis of tuberculosis to others.

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The impact of perceived social support on the treatment outcome of tuberculosis patients under DOTs

Background:

Tuberculosis is not only a medical disease but also a social disease. Compliance to the prescribed regimen is influenced by various factors like patient's social and economic background, his past health seeking behavior, and social support he /she gets from his family and community. Studies pertaining to the influence of social support on treatment compliance are limited.

Aim:

To study the influence of perceived social support on treatment outcome of TB patients under DOTS.

Methods:

This is a prospective study on TB patients registered at the Corporation clinics of Chennai and the District TB Centre Kancheepuram, Tamil Nadu. A semi-structured interview schedule was used to elicit information. So far 260 patients (100 from rural and 160 from urban) have been interviewed.

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Knowledge, Attitude and Practice of Persons at risk in relation to a future HIV Vaccine Trial

Background:

In TRC, efforts are ongoing for conducting HIV Vaccine Trials (HIVVT). Prior to any HIV preventive vaccine trial, it is very important to assess the concerns, knowledge gaps, attitude toward HIV vaccines and willingness to participate in future HIVVTs among populations at high risk of HIV infection. To address these issues, a sociological study with two-phased qualitative-quantitative approach is being conducted to find out the HIV vaccine readiness among population at risk for HIV/AIDS.

Aims:

To elicit information on

1. Demographic characteristics of the study participants and their knowledge of and attitude towards HIV/AIDS and HIV vaccines.

2. Perceptions about willingness to participate in a future HIVVT and factors which enhance or diminish their willingness to participate.

Methods:

During phase-I from October 2004 to January 2005, 12 focus group discussions (8 from Chennai and 4 from Madurai) were conducted among the following sub groups: Injecting Drug Users, Men having Sex with Men, women in sex work, truckers and people who report recent Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs). As there are indications that the HIV epidemic has moved into the general population, a representative sample of married women has been included for the study.

Results:

The participants were screened for their eligibility and written informed consent was obtained after giving the information about the purpose of the study and future HIVVTs. Focus group sessions were audio taped for subsequent transcription apart from the recorded observations. At the end, the participants were assessed using the CDC Vaccine Attitude Survey Scale. The analysis of qualitative data is being done on the basis of the study findings. Phase II will be conducted among 500 participants with the modified questionnaire. The information will help researchers to develop recommendations for encouraging participation of high-risk individuals in future HIVVTs.

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