



Original Research Article

Awareness about HIV/AIDS among Auto Rickshaw Drivers at Field Practice Area of an Urban Health Centre at Mumbai, Maharashtra

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ABSTRACT

Based on the revised estimates, the adult HIV prevalence in India is 0.27% as of 2011. Auto rickshaw drivers are a unique segment, in that by virtue of their work they came into contact with large number of people and can therefore act as agents spreading key messages about HIV/AIDS to the general public. The aim of present study is to assess the awareness regarding HIV/AIDS among Auto rickshaw drivers. It is a cross-sectional community based survey infield practice area of urban health centre. Auto rickshaw drivers chosen by universal sampling method interviewed during study period. Statistical Analysis performed by Percentages & Chi Square test. Out of total 150 Auto rickshaw drivers, 96 (64.0%) had heard about HIV/AIDS. Awareness level increased with increase in educational status. Out of 96, 74.2% drivers knew that unprotected sex is the main mode of transmission. TV (63.0%) was the common media as source of information. Only 36.2% knew that the disease is not curable.

Key words: Auto rickshaw drivers, HIV/AIDS awareness.

INTRODUCTION

HIV / AIDS is a serious challenge for the developing as well as developed world. In a span of two decades, since its first identification, HIV infection has become a pandemic and has posed a formidable challenge to a mankind. Based on the revised estimates, the adult HIV prevalence in India is .027%, as of 2011. ^[1] AIDS prevention strategy largely depends on health education and behavioural changes based on AIDS awareness among the population which has started showing its results in India where the prevalence has shown slight decline in the recent past.

Awareness constitutes the cornerstone of all intervention endeavours for HIV transmission, more so in case of high risk groups. Auto rickshaw drivers are a unique segment, in that by virtue of their work they come into contact with large number of people and can therefore act as agents spreading key messages about HIV/AIDS to the general public. ^[2] With this perspective the present study was conducted to assess the knowledge and awareness regarding HIV/AIDS among auto rickshaw drivers.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present study was carried out in the Field practice area of an urban health centre of a Medical College at metropolitan city. It is a cross sectional community based study. Auto-rickshaw drivers chosen by universal sampling method i.e. as many auto-rickshaw drivers interviewed during study period as possible. Auto-rickshaw drivers were interviewed with predesigned questionnaire at rickshaw stands after obtaining verbal consent. Interviews were conducted by the author. The data collected for the period of 3 months. (December – February 2011).

The Inclusion Criteria was all auto-rickshaw drivers in the field practice area of urban health centre and willing to give verbal consent. Demographic profile of rickshaw drivers collected followed by those who have heard about HIV AIDS were interviewed for knowledge and awareness about HIV AIDS and included in the study. Auto-rickshaw drivers who were unwilling to participate excluded from the study also those who have not heard about HIV AIDS excluded for knowledge awareness interview.

For the study purpose variables includes demographic characters like Age, marital status, education, ethnicity etc. & HIV-AIDS knowledge, awareness about modes of transmission, source of information, curability of disease and blood testing for disease in the study.

All collected data entered into MS office 2010 and analyzed using SPSS software version 16.0.

RESULT

In the present study, total of 150 rickshaw drivers interviewed during the study period.

59.3% of the auto rickshaw drivers were in 21 to 40 years age group while the elder population above 60 was only 4.2%, 20% was native while 80% were immigrants. Majority of the auto rickshaw drivers (60.0%) had education from primary to Metric, 5.5 % were illiterate and only 12.7% were graduates. (76.8%) auto rickshaw drivers were married. Out of total 150 auto rickshaw drivers, 96 (64.0%) had heard of HIV/ AIDS.

Table 1: Socio-demographic profile of the Rickshaw drivers who participated in the present study.

Variables	Number of auto-rickshaw drivers N=150	Auto-rickshaw drivers who heard about HIV-AIDS N=96	Statistical analysis	
	N (%)	N (%)	χ^2 value	PValue
1.Age (yrs)				
< 20	14 (9.0)	06 (6.3)	3.14	0.05
21-30	43 (28.8)	25 (57.3)		
31-40	46 (30.8)	36 (76.2)		
41-50	31 (20.5)	22 (74.1)		
51-60	10 (07.0)	05 (50.0)		
>60	6 (04.2)	02 (28.0)		
2.Education				
Illiterate	8 (5.5)	3 (37.5)	17.79	0.001
Primary	35 (23.6)	17 (48.0)		
Secondary	55 (36.4)	32(58.1)		
Higher secondary	33 (21.8)	26(78.7)		
Graduates	19 (12.7)	18(94.7)		
3.Ethnicity				
Local	30 (20)	25 (83.3)	6.08	0.013
Migrant	120 (80)	71 (59.1)		
4.Marital status				
Married	115 (76.8)	79 (69.0)	4.71	0.029
Unmarried	35 (23.2)	17 (44.6)		

Out of 46 subjects in 31-40 yrs age group, 35(76.2%) had heard about HIV/AIDS. The percentage of subjects who had heard about HIV/AIDS increased with increase in age except those above 50yrs of age in which the sample size was small. Education level had significant impact on the knowledge regarding HIV/AIDS among Auto rickshaw drivers. The observed difference was found to be highly significant ($\chi^2=17.79$, $df=4$ $P<0.001$) Majority of the auto rickshaw drivers who were educated above matric had heard about HIV/AIDS.

Also majority of the native knew about HIV/AIDS ($P<0.01$). Of the 115 married Auto rickshaw drivers, 79 (69.8%) knew about HIV/AIDS, which were also found to be significant (as shown in table 1).

Out of 96 Auto rickshaw drivers, 74.2% knew that unprotected sex is the commonest mode of transmission. Infected blood and injections as mode of transmission was responded by 67.4% & 57.5% respectively. 15% subjects had misconceptions that even hand shaking; sharing clothes can spread AIDS while 26% said that mosquito bite can also spread AIDS (as shown in table 2).

Table 2: Knowledge regarding modes of transmission among the Rickshaw drivers who Heard about HIV /AIDS in preset study.

Modes of transmissions	Number of subjects* (N=96)	Percentage
Unprotected sex	71	74.2
Infected blood	65	67.4
Injections	55	57.4
Mother to child	46	47.8
Sharps	27	28.4
Handshaking	14	15.1
Sharing of cloths, food	14	14.8
Mosquitoes	25	26.0

*Multiple Responses.

The study subjects were asked about the source of information regarding their knowledge about HIV/AIDS. TV was the main source of information as responded by 63% of them (as shown in Table 3). 34.9%

auto rickshaw drivers stated that they received information from friends followed by 25.5% through newspapers & posters. Other sources of information included health workers, Neighbours, Radio etc.

Table 3: Source of Information about HIV/AIDS among the Rickshaw drivers who Heard about HIV /AIDS in preset study.

Source of information	Number of subjects* (N=96)	Percentage
TV	60	63.0
Friends	34	34.9
News-papers, books & posters	24	25.5
Doctor	06	06.2
Other	12	12.5

*Multiple Responses

Regarding the curability of the disease, 36.2% (1/3rd) correctly responded that disease is not curable. 68.7% auto rickshaw drivers were in favour of getting blood tested for HIV in routine (as shown in Table 4).

Table 4: Knowledge about HIV/AIDS Curability and necessity of blood testing Among the Rickshaw drivers who heard about HIV/AIDS in preset study.

Variables	Yes	No	Do not know
HIV-AIDS curable	24(25.5)	35(36.2)	37(38.3)
Blood test necessary	66(68.7)	16(16.4)	14(14.8)

DISCUSSION

In this study, it was found that 76.6% of Auto rickshaw drivers had heard about HIV/AIDS against 97.2% of awareness reported in study done among Truck drivers in Maharashtra in 2006. [3] In a study conducted in Aurangabad city of India, 88.0% Auto rickshaw drivers knew about HIV/AIDS [4] & Raut et al [5] found it to be 96%.

Awareness level increased with increase in education level. In the present study, 74.2% were aware that unprotected sex is the main mode of transmission; this finding is more than that observed (53.4%) during the study conducted by S.S. Chaudhary et al among Auto rickshaw

drivers at Nagpur. [6] In the study done in Aurangabad, 100% subjects knew about sexual transmission of the disease. [4] In a study done in Maharashtra, 94.69% truck drivers had knowledge of transmission by heterosexual route. [3] In a study done in Chennai in Auto rickshaw drivers, 46.0% were aware of one correct way of transmission. [2]

TV was the main source of information of HIV/AIDS in the present study. Similarly TV was considered the most common source (70.0%) & (88.9%) in Auto rickshaw drivers in Aurangabad city & among previously diagnosed HIV AIDS patients studied in Kolkata respectively. [4,7]

In this study, only 1/3rd of Auto rickshaw drivers were aware about the incurability of the disease. Whereas in similar study done in Auto rickshaw drivers in Aurangabad, 51.1% knew about non curability of the disease.

CONCLUSION

In the present study, two third of Auto rickshaw drivers had heard about HIV/AIDS. Awareness level increased with increased level of education & age. So, the most viable and acceptable step would be to increase the education and awareness about this disease in high risk populations like rickshaw drivers with special attention to youngsters.

Also, awareness levels was more in married & local people so awareness programme should need to focus on migrant population for awareness activities while continuing routine activities for general population. Though recent trend suggest that the prevalence of HIV-AIDS is declining, [1]

HIV-AIDS awareness activities should continue as it is with special attention towards young, migrant & unmarried population of auto-rickshaw drivers as suggested by the study findings.

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