

Lack of Knowledge on HIV/AIDS among Drug Users

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ABSTRACT

Background: Thailand is known for its achievement in controlling HIV/AIDS. However, the sentinel surveillance had reported HIV prevalence among intravenous injecting drug users remains unabated. Moreover, substance dependent population who did not use the substance by injecting also exhibited high HIV infection.

Method: To examine drug users' knowledge on their HIV risk the development of knowledge for prevention and alleviation of HIV/AIDS, a survey among drug users was organized from February to April 2005. Samples from treatment centers, juvenile court and corrections were interviewed.

Results: From 3468 drug users, 1214 persons in Bangkok and others in provincial areas were recruited. Among the samples, 505 and 742 people in Bangkok and provincial areas reported of ever been tested HIV. About 14% and 7% of the aforesaid groups were respectively found positive. Methamphetamine constituted the majority of their last substance abuse in non-HIV and never tested groups. Among HIV positive cases in provincial areas, 42% used heroin while in Bangkok only 27.8% used it. Nevertheless, 77.8% and 61.2% in those groups reported sharing syringes among friends. As regards knowledge of HIV/AIDS, 35-62% of drug users knew that HIV/AIDS is incurable. In addition, sexual intercourse was the most comprehensible contact method among others i.e. injecting drug, blood transmission and mother to child, (83-100%). Only 50-70% of non-HIV and never tested groups knew about injecting drug transmission whereas 97-100% of positive group mentioned this method. Less than 60% learnt about blood transmission and mother to child methods. The positive group inclined to know more than others. Their knowledge derived from mass media rather than Government's sectors. The standard questions about HIV knowledge were used. Statistics showed $c > 90\%$ significant difference knowledge among never tested, non-HIV and HIV positive in Bangkok while no difference was shown in provincial areas.

Conclusion and Discussion: Many agencies have been working on prevention programme for the drug users but the study stated drug users have not sufficient knowledge to cope with themselves. It seemed that only HIV positive tend to know more than other groups but there was no significance in provincial areas. Therefore, a strategy of the future plan to effectively implement the prevention programme should be intently considered.

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