General Knowledge and Misconceptions about HIV/AIDS among the University Students in Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

This study was aimed to determine the general knowledge and misconceptions among the undergraduate students in a private university in Malaysia. Data was collected from a stratified random sample of 180 students using a validated questionnaire survey to assess the general knowledge and misconceptions about HIV/AIDS. The data was analysed by using the SPSS software and Chi-square test was used to find the p-value for each of the questions. The average mean score assessing the general knowledge of the students in was 82.32%, where the Health Science students scored 45.11% with a standard deviation of 0.017 and the Non-Health Science students scored 36.15% with a standard deviation of 0.026. When comparing each question using the Chi-square test, most of the answers of the Health Science students and Non-Health Science students showed a significant difference where the p-value was <0.05. From the results of this study it is clear that the Health Science students had better knowledge and fewer misconceptions than the Non-Health Science students.

Keywords: General knowledge, Misconception, HIV/AIDS, students, Malaysia.

INTRODUCTION

Human immunodeficiency virus infection and acquired immune deficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS) is a spectrum of conditions caused by infection with the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). The human immunodeficiency virus is a lentivirus that causes HIV infection and over time acquired immunodeficiency syndrome. HIV infection is one of the largest threat in the world. With only 5 percent of the Eastern and Southern African, it is home to half of the world's population living with HIV. In recent decades, HIV/AIDS has been working its magic up into society, spreading like an unstoppable cancer, almost to the point of it being immortal. The cumulative number of HIV cases in Malaysia went up to 101,672 cases by the end of 2013 [1]. Due to lack of adequate information, youths are more exposed to infection as they engage in risky sexual practices [2].

There are few studies that have examined potential differences in knowledge and misconception towards HIV/AIDS. In Malaysia, talks and awareness programs about HIV/AIDS are held at secondary schools regularly. However, there are new cases of HIV/AIDS arising among people every year. This could be caused by low level of knowledge regarding HIV/AIDS. This shows that the awareness programs held at school levels alone is not enough to prevent this disease from spreading. However, these studies have been limited to compare integrated knowledge and misconceptions of the Health Science and Non-Health Science students. Health Science students may have a better exposure to gaining knowledge about