

P4.10. Knowledge of Deaf and Hearing Secondary School Students in a Half-way School in Ibadan, Nigeria to HIV/AIDS - A.O. Sangowawa, University of Ibadan, Nigeria; **E.T. Owoaje**, University of Ibadan, Nigeria; **B. Faseru**, University of Kansas Medical Centre; **I.P. Ebong**, University College Hospital, Nigeria

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Background/Significance: HIV/AIDS is still spreading worldwide and also in Nigeria with those in the reproductive age group mainly affected. Hence it is necessary to empower youths and adolescents with knowledge and skills to prevent them from getting infected. In Nigeria, as occurs in other nations, children with disabilities constitute a vulnerable group and suffer discrimination, abuse and exploitation. Disabilities put children in a more vulnerable situation than they would normally face, particularly in developing countries where social security networks are poorly developed. These disabilities make them handicapped in various aspects of social life. They often receive less education, become marginalized in social activities and end up having fewer opportunities for gainful employment later in life. Many of these children have received little attention with respect to HIV/AIDS prevention programmes.

Main Question/Hypothesis: This study was conducted to determine the level of HIV/AIDS knowledge among students with one form of disability - hearing impairments and compare their knowledge with that of their hearing counterparts.

Methodology: A comparative cross-sectional study was carried out in one of the two government-owned halfway schools for the deaf in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the school authorities and three of the school tutors assisted with administration of the questionnaire. All the deaf students in the school (junior and senior secondary sections) were interviewed. An equal number of hearing students were also selected from each of the classes (JSS1 – SS3) using simple random sampling technique (however, only 74 of these were included in the final analysis). The study instrument was adapted from the UNAIDS/UNESCO/WHO Handbook on School Health Education to Prevent AIDS and STD. Data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 11.

Findings: A total of 78 deaf students - 48 (61.5%) male and 30 (58.5%) female and 74 hearing students 44 (59.5%) male and 30 (40.5%) female with a mean age of 17.3 (S.D.+/-2.95) and 15.8 (S.D.+/-1.9) respectively participated. All the students (deaf and hearing) reported that they had heard about HIV/AIDS. Thirty-five (44.9%) deaf and 53 (71.6%) hearing students knew that there was no cure for AIDS ($\chi^2 = 11.15$, $p < 0.001$). Thirty (38.5%) deaf students and 67(90.5%) hearing students knew that HIV could be transmitted via semen, vaginal fluid and blood, ($\chi^2 = 44.60$, $p = 0.000$); 17 (21.8%) deaf and 51(68.9%) hearing students knew that one could not recognize a person with HIV by how he/ she looked ($\chi^2 = 34.11$, $p = 0.000$).

Knowledge Contribution: The study showed that the deaf students had a significantly poorer knowledge of HIV/AIDS compared with the hearing students. This highlights the need for comprehensive health education on HIV/AIDS to be designed for the hearing impaired. If this is made available to them, they will be empowered to become actively involved in designing and implementing HIV/AIDS prevention programmes designed for the hearing-impaired. In addition, they will be able to reach out and offer care, support and counseling to hearing-impaired people with HIV/AIDS.