

A step towards effective
communication of HIV/AIDS
related information

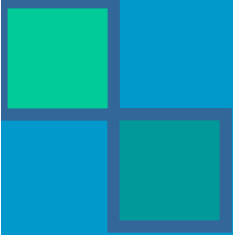

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Experiences

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- During Bharat Jan Vigyan Jatha (taking science to the public), 1987
 - Establishment of PAUS group at NISTADS
 - Large scale survey studies, in the country and abroad
 - Kumbh, 1989,1995,2001
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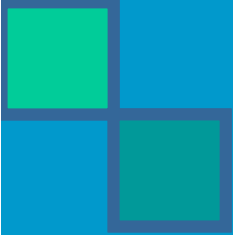



Survey of public understanding of HIV/AIDS related issues

- over 35000 respondents
 - covering 23 states(provinces) of the country
 - 57:43 gender ratio
 - mostly up to the age of 35 years from rural areas
 - 18 percent no schooling only 17 percent attended college
 - 17 percent no gainful activity
 - 29 percent unmarried, 55 percent married, 1 percent widow/divorcee etc.
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Issues Addressed

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- General Information about HIV/AIDS
 - Transmission of HIV/AIDS
 - Prevention/Cure of HIV/AIDS
 - Resistance to HIV/AIDS
 - Detection and test of HIV/AIDS
 - Attitudes towards disease and patient
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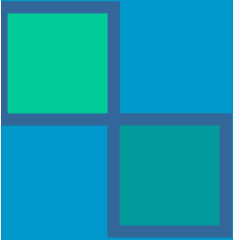

General Information

Heard of AIDS	88
Knowledge of a person with AIDS	60
Have met any AIDS patient	28



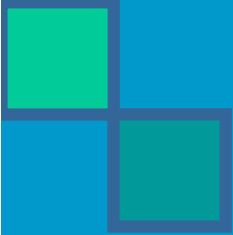


General Information


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- Rural background
 - No access to media channels
 - Information spread through interpersonal modes
 - Such large percentage indicates that if a person is detected positive the news spreads far and wide
 - Interpersonal channels of communication are quite sensitive to information related to HIV/AIDS
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Transmission of HIV/AIDS

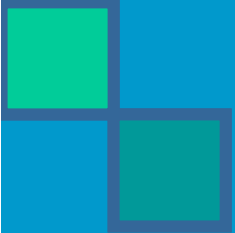



Unprotected sexual contact	72
Blood infected with HIV	75
Infected Needle	74
Infected mother to child	66
Breast-feeding by infected mother	47
Shaking hands with infected	20
Mosquito-bite	26



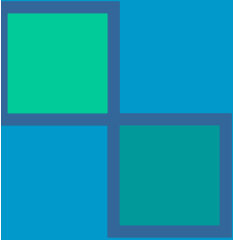


Transmission of HIV/AIDS


- general awareness about HIV/AIDS among the common citizen is quite high
 - when we move to areas of specific information, the information level gradually reduces to abysmally low percentages.
 - absence of correct scientific explanations leads to myths and unscientific beliefs
 - social consciousness is far stronger determinant of knowledge base as compared to the imparted convoluted scientific explanations
 - should take into account the debates that are going on in the area of expertise known as 'Public Understanding of Science'
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Prevention and cure

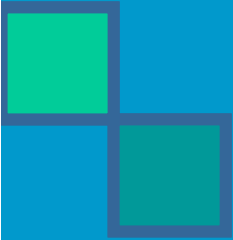



Use of condom	62
Having one uninfected life-partner	60
Abstinence	55
Use of disposable syringes	61
Early diagnosis of mother	49
Transfusion of safe blood	57
It can be cured	33



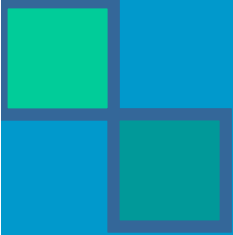


Prevention and cure


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- campaigns that were administered by various **government and non-governmental agencies** have yielded positive results
 - efforts have been able to raise the **awareness level of a sizable population, especially of illiterate segments** or in other words 'most vulnerable' sections of society
 - large segment still remain ignorant** or else apathetic towards the seriousness of the situation
 - awareness level among **women is far less compared to men**. This warrants specially focussed programmes directed towards raising the information level of women citizens of all ages
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Resistance to HIV/AIDS

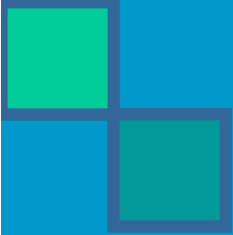



Young are resistant to AIDS infection	40
Sharing of razors is OK.	31
Villagers are at lesser risk	38
Sex workers and Drivers are at high risk	33





Resistance to HIV/AIDS

- Analysis revealed mixed responses
 - they knew that this is not the disease, which is restricted to sex workers and truck drivers
 - population was not in agreement with the notion that healthy individual or individuals staying in villages are less susceptible to the infections.
 - Generally, people do not advise to share shaving razors with the infected persons as there is possibility of infection.
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Proper and accurate information is essential part of the communication



Detection and tests for HIV/AIDS



- Can any test detect HIV/AIDS (NO)
42

-Awareness of Voluntary Counselling and Testing (VCT) facility 47






Detection and tests for HIV/AIDS


-campaigns by 'family and health organisation'
have not touched a sizable segment



Attitude towards disease and patients



Support and care for patients	72
Can talk about freely among friends and family members	62
Patients can lead a simple life	55





Attitude towards disease and patients



Want to work against the epidemic 73

What you can do?

No response 69.0

Attend all programmes on AIDS 19.3

Talk to friend etc. 6.6

Write slogans on walls 2.4

Write songs and sing 0.8





Attitude towards disease and patients

-Want to fight the epidemic but hesitate to do anything because of social stigma attached to it

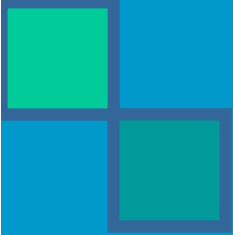

-Only 16 percent responded that a patient can lead a normal life

Role of governmental and non-governmental organisations, in awareness needs to be intensified



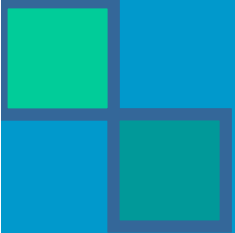




Further

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- Indian and international survey tells: ***There is no 'general' audience***
 - Communication must have 'Intended Audience' (Selected groups)
 - Selective messages
 - Effectiveness of communication depends on accurate reception and use of information
 - 'One-size-fit-all' theory does not work
 - 'General public' notion of communication undermines the efforts to address hard-to-reach audience
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Public is not dumb

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- Public is not illiterate to any information
 - It understands phenomena in its own way
 - Understanding varies from scientifically correct to scientifically incorrect, divine intervention, don't know, etc.
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More success can be achieved by
direct involvement of experts like
scientists, doctors, teachers, etc. in
communication process

- Professional responsibility
 - Query from public can be answered
 - Interaction with media is essential for experts
 - Communication training sessions needed for scientists
 - Accurate and fair dissemination
 - Scientists to be more articulate and clear about their work, participate in public information efforts
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Proliferation of new media essential for effective communication

- Communication through all type of media, TV, Radio, Books, Magazine, Newspaper, Internet etc.
 - Internet based programmes reach individual users directly
 - Mobile phones
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Associated superstitions and wrong beliefs must be addressed

- Society still has superstitions, wrong beliefs (in spite of wide spread education).
 - Communicator should take note of these and must address the associated superstitions while communicating
 - Regional diversity should be kept in mind
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Two research areas deserve attention



1 Exploring the relationship between quality and quantity of science communication

2 Understanding the interests and behaviours of publics (PUS)





Acknowledgements

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THANKS