

HIV and AIDS in Kosovo, Stigma Persist!

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Abstract : The official HIV/AIDS data in Kosovo are based on HIV case reporting from health-care services, the blood transfusion system and Voluntary Counselling and Testing centres. Between 1986 and 2014, are reported 95 HIV and AIDS cases, of which 49 were AIDS, 46 HIV and 40 deaths. The majority (69%) of cases were men, age group 25 to 34 (37%) and route of transmission is: heterosexual (90%), MSM (7%), vertical transmission (2%) and IDU (1%). Based on existing data and the UNAIDS classification system, Kosovo is currently still categorised as having a low-level HIV epidemic. Even though with a low HIV prevalence, Kosovo faces a number of threatening factors, including increased number of drug users, a stigmatized and discriminated MSM community, high percentage of youth among general population (57% of the population under the age of 25), with changing social norms and especially the sexual ones. Methods: Data collection was done using self administered structured questionnaires amongst 249 high school students. Data were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Results: The findings revealed that 68% of students know that HIV transmission can be reduced by having sex with only one uninfected partner who has no other partners, 94% know that the risk of getting HIV can be reduced by using a condom every time they have sex, 68% know that a person cannot get HIV from mosquito bites, 81% know that they cannot get HIV by sharing food with someone who is infected and 46% know that a healthy looking person can have HIV. Conclusions: Seventy one percent of high school students correctly identify ways of preventing the sexual transmission of HIV and who reject the major misconceptions about HIV transmission. The findings of the study indicate a need for more health education and promotion.

Keywords : Kosovo, KPAR, HIV, high school

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