

Title – A Survey of HIV Prevalence in Youth in the United States

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Abstract:

HIV-1 is one of the leading infectious diseases nationally and globally. One of the largest groups affected by this are 20-29 year olds which account for more than 1 in 5 new HIV diagnoses in 2014 (Control, 2016). One of the contributing factors is that 84% of 15-24 year olds have a stigma around HIV infection (Control, 2016). A stigma can be defined as, “the shame or disgrace attached to something regarded as socially unacceptable” (Pebody, 2017). There may be a feeling of ‘us and them’. People who are stigmatized are marked out as being different and are blamed for that difference. This causes same and discrimination around this issue so they are more apt to ignore this issue. As a result, the 20-29 year old age bracket is among the least likely to receive treatment for this disease. The percent of US high schools in which students are required to receive instruction on HIV prevention is only 41% in 2014 (Control, 2016). How does this compare to college campuses in 2017 considering how the highest percent of youth for infection is 20-29 year olds? Our hypothesis is that HIV is most prevalent in the 20-29 age group because of an absence of HIV/STD education. A cross-sectional, quantitative research survey was conducted that addressed topics, such as the description of the disease, statistics involving HIV awareness of prevalent, and HIV prevention. Questions addressing the person’s personal beliefs related to stigma were asked. These include if they would be ashamed to have someone in their family contract the disease or if they were whiling to buy food from a vendor with HIV. The data was collected by an online survey that took place at Liberty University and Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. Through the survey, there were 50 Liberty University students and 50 Virginia Tech students who completed the survey. When analyzing the combined total of each school, each question was looked at and the percentage of students who chose the correct answer was recorded. In reference to the statistical questions, a majority of student chose the wrong answer. In reference to the definition of HIV, how it is transmitted and preventative measure of HIV, about a majority of students would chose the correct answer. In reference to a stigma it can be concluded that there were a majority of students who were indifferent. By the end of this survey, the data was could be interpreted to the point where more research is needed to reach a consistent hypothesis. With this conclusion, we will need to go more in depth with future work and implications. We are looking into a survey of stigma and a survey of the mentality of youth possessing an invincibility type attitude. From these results, we

hope to help colleges evaluate how they address HIV. We can encourage lectures at freshman orientations as well as have college students take a survey and be able to read the answers at the end to help raise awareness.

References

Control, C. f. (2016, April 27). *HIV Among Youth*. Retrieved from CDC.gov:
www.cdc.gov/hiv/group/h/youth/

Pebody, R. (2017, 2 28). *HIV Stigma and Discrimination* . Retrieved from AIDS Map:
<http://www.aidsmap.com/files/file1001097.pdf>

Christian worldview:

With HIV/AIDs being a controversial topic among the Christian believers, we as Christian scientists are to approach this topic with caution. It is important to look at the ways HIV is transmitted. There are more ways than just sexual intercourse. It can be transmitted through pregnancy between mother and child and coming into contact with infected blood. No matter how the disease may have been contracted, God cares and loves for each and every patient. As Christian doctors and scientists yearning to follow Christ's example, we are called to help and treat those with all diseases. This can be an opportunity for us as Christians to reach out to those who feel isolated from their community because they have contracted this disease. Ezekiel 18:32 says, "For I take no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Sovereign LORD. Repent and live!"

Luke 10 shares the story of the Good Samaritan. This expresses how a man was beaten and left on the side of the road. A stranger helped him and treated the man with love and respect. Jesus states how the stranger was a neighbor to the man. Jesus commands us to "love our neighbor as ourselves." We are called to help those in love, kindness, and compassion. Whether or not we agree with the primary way this disease is contracted, does not mean we are not called to be kind and help those with it. As a Christian college, we want to faithfully inform the reflection upon this research so we can acknowledge the responsibility of the church. We understand the implication of sexual impurity but we are called to act in compassion and forgiveness for those who suffer. By performing this study, we are hoping to help those with HIV with the ultimate goal of eliminating the stigma and discrimination associated with HIV. Churches across the country can offer support groups and educational classes for college students and those with HIV to help provide insight on living with the disease.