

HIV-AIDS Education for Nurses: Practice Issues and Curriculum Guidelines



Article

Attitude of Health Care Workers (HCWs) toward Patients Affected by HIV/AIDS and Drug Users: A Cross-Sectional Study

Caterina Ledda ^{1,*}, Francesca Cicciù ², Beatrice Puglisi ², Tiziana Ramaci ³, Giuseppe Nunnari ⁴ and Venerando Rapisarda ^{1,2}

- ¹ Occupational Medicine, Department of Clinical and Experimental Medicine, University of Catania, Via Santa Sofia, 95123 Catania, Italy; vrapisarda@unicat.it
- ² University Hospital of Catania Policlinico-Vittorio Emanuele, Via Santa Sofia, 95123 Catania, Italy; francescacicciu@gmail.com (F.C.); beatricepuglisi@hotmail.it (B.P.)
- ³ Faculty of Human and Social Sciences, Kore University of Enna, Viale delle Olimpiadi, 94100 Enna, Italy; tiziana.ramaci@unikore.it
- ⁴ Unit of Infectious Diseases, Department of Clinical and Experimental Medicine, University of Messina, Via Consolare Valeria, 98124 Messina, Italy; giuseppe.nunnari@unime.it

* Correspondence: cledda@unicat.it
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Abstract: Caring for HIV/AIDS patients and/or drug users requires health care workers (HCWs) to have good knowledge of the issues. Cultural differences in HCWs, combined with professional ethics and personal beliefs, could also result in conflicting attitudes, leading to difficulties related to looking after people affected by HIV/AIDS or drug users. A cross-sectional study was carried out to assess the attitude towards HIV/AIDS patients and/or drug users in a sample of workers operating in a large university hospital in southern Italy. A total of 736 workers were surveyed from May to November 2016. During the periodic occupational health surveillance, a questionnaire was administered about attitudes of discrimination, acceptance and fear towards these patients. Respondents showed average levels of acceptance to HIV/AIDS and drug user patients. As years of experience and professional training increased, scores for discrimination, acceptance of HIV/AIDS, acceptance of drug users and fear decreased. Factors positively influencing levels of attitudes were being female and younger. Supplementary education is needed to strengthen the awareness of HCWs.

Keywords: healthcare workers; HIV; AIDS; drug users

1. Introduction

People living with HIV/AIDS require ongoing health care services as they are potentially at increased risk of developing disorders including cardiovascular and liver disease, accelerated bone loss, metabolic disorders, etc. [1–3]. Those able to access medical care are living longer and have improved their health thanks to antiretroviral medications. These patients are experiencing acute HIV-related chronic episodes and other types of illness that can require hospitalization and/or supportive care arrangements [4,5]. Several studies have investigated the attitudes, knowledge and practices of health care workers (HCWs) towards patients with HIV/AIDS and underlined that HCWs still fear the disease and behave prejudicially toward HIV/AIDS patients [6–11]. Factors which influence these attitudes include fear of contagion associated with the uncertainty of care and the awareness of feeling useless in providing care for patients with a potentially fatal disease [12].

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