

# Issues and challenges of GYN/OB nurses in the care of pregnant women with HIV

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## Abstract

Attitudes of nurses towards people living with HIV/AIDS have long been scrutinized. Studies show that some nurses have negative attitudes and are reluctant to provide care to people with HIV/AIDS, resulting in poorer quality nursing support being provided. Attitudes of nursing students towards caring for people with HIV/AIDS is thus of vital importance since they become the future practising nurses. This paper is a report of a literature review conducted to examine current research studies into attitudes of nursing students towards caring for people with HIV/AIDS and to identify factors that influenced those attitudes to inform current nursing practice and to develop nursing education regarding care provided to women with HIV/AIDS.

**Keywords:** HIV, management, attitudes, care, nursing practices, HIV knowledge

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## Introduction

Currently, human immunodeficiency virus and acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV and AIDS) education and training in nursing suffer from various inadequacies and lack any real formalisation in their governance. As a result, Bachelor of Nursing students find themselves challenged in providing effective HIV and AIDS healthcare management, largely because of the deficit in training identified [1]. It can be argued that much of the HIV and AIDS training currently available is offered only post-diplomate and certificate, with the very limited awarding of these qualifications having become embedded in preservice modules (HEAIDS 2010). Moreover, Relf et al. (2011) attest to a widespread lack of formal HIV and AIDS training and clinical mentoring in courses that are purely didactic both in nature and content, with the training materials available being either outmoded or, culturally speaking, contextually based in only one country's healthcare system[2]. The literature reviewed for this article reveals that a general and significant lack of HIV and AIDS-related knowledge is apparent amongst nursing graduates [3]. A similar deduction can be made concerning the statement that poor or inadequate knowledge of HIV and AIDS treatments has led to the provision of substandard clinical care for those patients suffering with them. Within the historical context of the university's School of Nursing, limited HIV and AIDS educational activities were previously offered to their undergraduates. This was additionally true, given that the school previously also employed no lecturers with competencies in HIV and AIDS learning, and therefore also had no tutors with the confidence to instruct nursing students in this subject. Nurses, being the backbone of any healthcare system [4], must therefore be encouraged to focus more attention on their current knowledge regarding these ailments. Because it has been generally observed that nursing students are presently provided with an inadequate or incomplete knowledge of HIV and AIDS patient healthcare management in their training, contemporary recommendations from studies that have been conducted in this area emphasise that a revision of nursing curricula, with particular regard to their HIV and AIDS content[5]. The impartation of incomplete and erroneous knowledge, particularly concerning approaches to HIV prevention, its modes of transmission and the pathogenicity of the virus, as well as its progressive form in AIDS, is found to be widespread amongst nursing trainees [6]. An appeal to improve the skills and subsequent competencies of nursing students through the provision of improved HIV training has therefore been made to those involved in the education sector, as well as to other health professionals, to see undergraduate nurses become better enabled in dealing with those coping with HIV and AIDS-related issues as they are currently perceived within clinical practice [7].

## Related research activities of HIV nursing

The provision of current information regarding the HIV virus and its resulting syndrome is considered critical for nurses and nursing students, because these individuals play a vital role in providing healthcare management

services to people living with HIV and AIDS (PLWHA) and this ensures provision of the highest quality and most effective standard of healthcare [8]. Literature on the subject, however, reveals that HIV and AIDS training within undergraduate nursing programmes is in need of very serious revision and augmentation [9], and this is considered a result of a general concern that has arisen regarding the low levels of critical HIV knowledge found amongst nursing students, not just in South Africa but also internationally [9]. The nursing students in these studies were moreover observed to entertain many misconceptions regarding how HIV is transmitted, including through the sharing of communal ablutions with an HIV-infected person, which it was thought could result in contracting the virus [10]. Another study demonstrated that some nursing students agree with the prognosis that HIV-positive individuals should be quarantined [11], while a further study established that nursing students may fail to correctly identify the correct HIV and AIDS medication when administering such treatments [12].

### **Awareness program related to HIV nursing**

The Medical Education Partnership Initiative clinical HIV and AIDS programme is an innovative programme. The main goal of the HIV and AIDS programme was to develop and implement appropriate HIV and AIDS activities for the undergraduate nursing curriculum. The programme was first introduced and implemented amongst second-year nursing students, where the programme focused on preventative and health promotion, which is an aspect of the community nursing science course. The students got to interact with various communities, with HIV and AIDS being one of the commonest health problems encountered in these communities [6,8].

### **Methods**

The study comprised 133 of the 237 Bachelor of Nursing students. However, 164 students were targeted, because they were in their second to fourth years of study and had enrolled for HIV educational programme at the selected nursing college (Rourkela Senior Nursing College, Sambalpur University, Odisha). Total population sampling was employed, with all undergraduate nursing students who had participated in the HIV and AIDS educational programme. Total inclusion of all educational programme recipients in the sample process was considered appropriate for the study, because the literature in this regard indicates that a study population should, where possible, be considered in total, particularly where the size of that population is relatively small, that is, comprising 200 people or less [5]. Although a total study population of 164 was targeted, only 133 students agreed to participate in the research conducted, pursuant on their right to refuse to volunteer for, or participate in, this study. Perceived knowledge uptake by the undergraduate nursing students participating in the education programme was measured through a five-point Likert scale, where they were asked as study participants to rate the HIV and AIDS theoretical knowledge and clinical skills understanding that they acquired through participating in the educational intervention programme. Participants' responses were limited to 'understanding very well', 'somewhat understand', 'unsure', 'somewhat don't understand', and 'not understanding at all.

### **Results**

The majority of the nursing students participating in the study were female (n = 110; 82.7%); of African origin (n = 109; 81.9%); born in South Africa (n = 127; 95.5%); and were in their second, third or fourth years of undergraduate study. A significant portion of the students (n = 52; 39.1%) had only 1 year of exposure to the educational programme, followed by those with 3 years of exposure (n = 47; 35.3%) and those (n = 34; 25.6%) with 2 years of programme exposure. Evident from the questionnaire responses obtained from the Bachelor of Nursing students was that they perceived they had indeed gained significant clinical knowledge of HIV and AIDS, and their treatment, from participating in the education intervention programme offered. Overall perceived knowledge of HIV and AIDS obtained from the programme was indicated by the highest score obtained from respondents who indicated being knowledgeable at 87.5% (n = 116) and the lowest score of 54.1% (n = 72), with the mean average score for this gain being 74.4% (n = 99).

### **Discussion**

Graduates should take advantage of all possible opportunities, such as that provided by the educational intervention programme in question, to become better equipped with the most current clinical HIV and AIDS information available, and this can be seen as an imperative, because nurses have always been reported on as being at the forefront of HIV and AIDS healthcare management, from the time the very first

case of the epidemic was reported onwards [13]. The general enabling of the acquisition of knowledge by postgraduate nursing students communicates that measures are constantly being planned and implemented to bridge the globally reported gap found to exist in nursing curricula that include HIV and AIDS as a subject; they can be seen as a response to the inadequacies that are seen as present, particularly in the HIV and AIDS course content until recently delivered to undergraduate nursing students [13,14]. This study's findings are therefore also anticipated to restore hope to HIV and AIDS sufferers in this regard; moreover, they are seen as extremely encouraging, because all of the students surveyed for the study quite evidently experienced significant gains in their knowledge of HIV and AIDS by participating in the educational programme provided for them, which is expected to translate into a higher quality of clinical HIV and AIDS healthcare being rendered to such patients by nursing professionals overall [15]. Employers, students and healthcare recipients may all reap enormous benefits from the preservice training indicated here, because employers do not suffer any significant financial deficit, or loss in time devoted to productivity, by its provision, with there concomitantly being no need for additional employee training or other possible staff replacement costs that employers otherwise might incur. Students can likewise benefit on both a personal and professional level from the introduction of such learning interventions. Especially on a personal level, all information gained from such programmes can be applied in their daily professional lives, which is important because infection with HIV recognises no boundaries [16].

### Conclusion

The outcomes for this study provide sufficient evidence that more Bachelor of Nursing students. The majority of the nurses surveyed may now more confidently render appropriate HIV and AIDS patient healthcare management services to sufferers of the virus and its accompanying syndrome [17]. In doing so, these nurses may also enjoy a greater degree of independence, because of the capacities now invested in them by access to the provision of the programme for imparting contextually relevant knowledge concerning HIV and AIDS. It is imperative that those tasked with curriculum development for nursing training within the South African Health Ministry, for the nursing profession's regulating body and at institutions of higher learning, do full justice to their undergraduate students by planning curricula in line with the needs of the country's healthcare-recipient population [15,18]. The understanding and treatment of HIV and AIDS are a priority, especially within the Indian content. The provision of training interventions that deal specifically with the imparting of HIV and AIDS healthcare management skills for delivery to the nursing profession are therefore seen as essential in ensuring that competent nursing postgraduates, who are effective in responding to the country's needs with regard to HIV and AIDS healthcare management provision.

### Competing interests

The authors have declared that no competing interest exists.

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