



POSTER PRESENTATION

Open Access

Knowledge and attitudes on HIV/AIDS and sexual behaviour among male soldiers in Sri Lanka Army

Saveen Semage^{1*}, Sujatha Samarakoon²

From 16th International Symposium on HIV and Emerging Infectious Diseases
Marseille, France. 24-26 March 2010

Introduction

HIV/AIDS can pose a threat to military preparedness and cohesion. Military in Sri Lanka too experience a very favourable environment for risk behaviours.

Objectives

To assess knowledge and attitudes on HIV/AIDS and sexual behaviour among male soldiers in Sri Lanka Army.

Methods

A cross sectional descriptive study was conducted among 600 soldiers selected using multi stage random sampling and a self administered questionnaire was used to collect information during the month of August 2007. Level of knowledge was decided using inter quartile range (25th centile was considered as poor knowledge) and attitudes were assessed on a likert scale.

Results

Response rate was 99.5% (n = 597). A majority (88.6%; n = 447) had completed education up to GCE O/L. Level of knowledge on HIV/AIDS was satisfactory in 57.1% (n = 341). A statistically significant association of satisfactory knowledge on HIV/AIDS was observed with an educational level of \geq GCE A/L (p < 0.001) and period of military service of >10 years (p = 0.03) but not with area of service and age.

A majority of soldiers (55.7%; n = 333) had desirable attitudes towards HIV/AIDS which was significantly associated with an educational level of \geq GCE A/L (p < 0.001) but not with age, period of military service or area of service.

Ninety percent (n = 498) of them were currently sexually active. Nearly half (47.7%; n = 259) had their sex

debut before 20 years of age. A majority (80.2%; n = 481) have had premarital sex and 45% (n = 238) of currently sexually active soldiers reported having non regular sexual partners during last 12 months. Prevalence of consistent condom use with a non regular partner was only 21.8% (n = 52) where as only 37% (n = 88) had used a condom at the most recent sexual contact with a non regular partner. Reasons for not using were mainly perception of invulnerability (62.7%; n = 94) and non availability (24%; n = 36). Lifetime homosexual experience was 19.6% (n = 99). About one third (32.1%; n = 190) had not had any educational exposure on HIV/AIDS.

Discussion

Marginal level of knowledge (57.1%) and risky sexual behaviour existing among soldiers would create a conducive environment to trigger a possible epidemic endangering the general population too.

Author details

¹Sri Lanka Army Medical Services, Colombo, Sri Lanka. ²National STD/AIDS Control Program, Ministry of Healthcare & Nutrition Sri Lanka, Colombo, Sri Lanka.

Published: 11 May 2010

doi:10.1186/1742-4690-7-S1-P117

Cite this article as: Semage and Samarakoon: Knowledge and attitudes on HIV/AIDS and sexual behaviour among male soldiers in Sri Lanka Army. *Retrovirology* 2010 **7**(Suppl 1):P117.

* Correspondence: saveen70@yahoo.com

¹Sri Lanka Army Medical Services, Colombo, Sri Lanka