

Brief Report

**KNOWLEDGE AND FEELINGS OF SOME PEOPLE ABOUT CONDOM USE IN RELATION TO HIV/AIDS IN ADDIS ABABA**

Hailegnaw Eshete,\* BSc.,MS.,MPH

**INTRODUCTION**

HIV infections and acquired immuno deficiency syndrome (AIDS) have been reported to be pandemic in a number of countries in Africa (1). Among others, the sexually active and economically productive members of the society are reported to be the most affected.

To stop further spread of HIV infection, the use of condoms has been suggested as an alternative particularly in multi-partner sexual relationships (2). Previous studies made by Jonathan Mann and others indicate significant difference and low seropositivity among Zairian prostitutes reporting condom use (3). Ngugi and others have also reported the success of preventing the spread of HIV through condom promotion and health education programmes among Kenyan prostitutes (4). This was further supported by the works of Roumelutou and others among cohorts of prostitutes in Greece (5). In addition, Goldberg and others recently recommended the use of condoms not only in homosexual and heterosexual practices but also in heterosexual orogenital sex (6).

Although a total of 496 cases of AIDS have been reported in Ethiopia as of November 1990 there is no information about the use of condoms neither among prostitutes nor the general public (7). The availability of condoms in the past had been exclusively confined to only a few urban areas. Apart from the fact that some sexual partners do not favour the use of condoms, there is social stigma attached to obtaining them.

The present study is designed to provide clues on the knowledge and feelings about condom use in relation to HIV/AIDS in Addis Ababa and stimulate social scientists to undertake further research on condom availability, distribution and acceptance particularly in urban areas where there is a high human concentration and the risk of acquiring HIV infection is high.

**METHODOLOGY**

A 4 page questionnaire was prepared to gather relevant information about knowledge and feelings about condoms in relation to HIV/AIDS in Addis Ababa. All questions were of the multiple choice type and pre-coded for further analysis by computer. The survey was completed in three days on patients who had been referred to the National Research Institute of Health for various laboratory tests excluding HIV. Because of the nature of the study randomization was not possible. Every participant included in the survey was on a voluntary basis. On a separate page attached to the questionnaire, every respondent was notified about the objectives and confidentiality of the survey. There was no obligation to participate in the survey. Anonymity was guaranteed. Children and illiterates were excluded from the survey.

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\*National Research Institute of Health, Addis Ababa

## RESULT

Demographic and socio-economic status of the surveyed people revealed that 71% are males, 56% married and 78% dependent on their personal income. Fifteen years was the youngest person included in the survey and the majority (64%) were between the ages of 15-54. Of all surveyed 74% said they were aware of AIDS, but 33% still did not know that condom would be useful for the prevention of AIDS. 69% failed to estimate the price of a single condom. Thirty two percent believe in condom use. 11% had used condoms once or more in the past. Nevertheless, 47% of the respondents were not sure about its effectiveness and 12% did not like condoms at all while 9% think it will decrease their sexual gratification. Only 22% said they are anticipating its use in the future and 62% have positive attitudes that condoms should be used by the society.

## DISCUSSION

The city of Addis Ababa as the country's industrial, commercial and administrative centre attracts a constant flow of unskilled labour from the countryside which has resulted in an increasing amount of unemployment. As a result, among many other social problems, the problems of prostitution have become a matter of increasing concern in the city. Apart from prostitution, the low socio-economic status of the population, a high rate of divorce, the trans-migration of the population and a steady flow of people from practically all corners of the world could aggravate the situation of AIDS in the city. Recently, Population Service International (PSI), a non-governmental organization in Ethiopia in collaboration with the Department of AIDS Control (DAC) has been involved in promoting condom use in much of the country. The "HIWOT" (meaning life) brand condom has been approved by the government and this has become accessible to the general public through the recently opened distribution outlets in a number of major towns in the country. The price is affordable since a packet consisting of 4 condoms is sold for 30 Ethiopian cents. Hence, different governmental and non-governmental institutions have already established links with PSI to purchase condoms for resale and distribution to their employees.

It is known that the use of condoms will not absolutely eliminate the risk of transmission and condom use is therefore viewed as a secondary strategy (8). This is likely attributable to poor quality condoms or improper usage (9). It was further demonstrated that condoms failed to prevent HIV transmission in 3 of 18 couples and the rate of failure may be as high as 17% (10). Thus the major emphasis should still be on bringing behavioral and attitudinal changes so that individuals stick to one sexual partner as much as possible. Should one be tempted to indulge in multiple sexual partners the use of condoms should not be seen as a matter of choice but a question of necessity.

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