Conclusions

HIV remains as an important health issue. All health care educational institutions including dental schools must include in their curriculum a comprehensive, up-to-date clinical and didactic program to improve knowledge and attitudes of dental students toward patients living with HIV/AIDS. This curriculum must be integrated throughout the four-year educational program to instill correct values and attitudes towards patients living with HIV/AIDS.

Discussion

Empirical Findings from Literature

Many studies have assessed student knowledge and attitudes of patients living with HIV. An analysis of recent literature reveals strikingly similar findings when examining dental students in the U.S. and internationally. Dental students in the U.S. and internationally have a low level of knowledge about HIV/AIDS, and exhibit negative attitudes toward patients living with HIV/AIDS. Dental education must strive for a more effective and comprehensive didactic and clinical education to improve knowledge and attitudes of dental students toward patients living with HIV/AIDS.

Empirical Findings – Knowledge Levels

A survey was created specifically for this study. It was peer-reviewed by the AETC and created to examine the current knowledge level of HIV and attitudes of second year dental students related to treating HIV patients as they begin their clinical rotations.

Surveys were administered to second year dental students in the NSU-CDM survey indicate a very low level of knowledge of critical knowledge that is necessary to treat patients living with HIV/AIDS. Students have already begun treating patients and are about to begin their full entry into the pre-doctoral clinic treatment setting. To address the knowledge and attitudes of dental students toward patients living with HIV/AIDS an analysis of recent literature reveals strikingly similar findings when examining dental students in the U.S. and internationally. Dental education must strive for a more effective and comprehensive didactic and clinical education to improve knowledge and attitudes of dental students toward patients living with HIV/AIDS.

Material and Methods

The NSU College of Dental Medicine for fourth-year dental students who participate in a 14-week clinical rotation at the NSU-CDM Cypress Creek Clinic, fourth year dental students complete a 14-week didactic and clinical rotation where they treat HIV/AIDS patients in a clinic program as a 24-hour clinic funded through the Ryan White Act. Programs results from the exit survey indicate very different results from those of the survey examining second-year students. 90% of students knew correct values for viral suppressions and CD4. 70% of students agreed they were comfortable providing care to patients living with HIV. 90% of students agreed or strongly agreed they were comfortable providing care to patients living with HIV.

Current Comparison: Pre Clinical vs Post Clinical

Sadeghi et al.’s study found that, when examining dental students in Iran, 1% of participants demonstrated a “professional attitude” about patients living with HIV/AIDS. Riddle et al. research involving pharmacy students indicated that training provided to pharmacy students increased HIV knowledge and also suggested that patients living with HIV/AIDS may have a greater professional attitude caring for people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA). 

Future Perspectives

A study conducted by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, indicated that increased knowledge leads to a more positive professional attitude caring for people living with HIV/AIDS. Studies have shown that students receive the most knowledge in the clinical rotations where they actually interact with patients living with HIV/AIDS. A study conducted by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, indicated that increased knowledge leads to a more positive professional attitude caring for people living with HIV/AIDS. Studies have shown that student receive the most knowledge in the clinical rotations where they actually interact with patients living with HIV/AIDS.

Conclusions

This study used a 25-item survey assessing student knowledge of HIV and attitudes toward patients living with HIV/AIDS. A total of 72 students participated in the survey. Each survey had a unique identifier so students could not be identified and globally. All health care professionals including dentists must possess current knowledge to treat their patients about HIV/AIDS and provide appropriate referral and support mechanisms. The purpose of this survey is to examine the current level of knowledge of HIV and attitudes of second year dental students related to treating HIV patients as they begin their clinical rotations.

Annals of Dental Surgery

4th Year Dental Student

Discussion

Empirical Findings – Knowledge Levels

Of the 15 surveys reviewed, only five (33%) second-year dental students personally know a patient with HIV/AIDS. Information related to dental visits, lifestyle factors, and values important to treating patients living with HIV/AIDS, indicates a low level of knowledge and understanding. 1% indicated the proper lab value for a virtually suppressed patient, 20% reported the incorrect value. 70% did not answer the question. 3% indicated that they had received knowledge to prescribistic antibiotic prophylaxis for patients with HIV/AIDS. 50% knew the correct CD4 count that defines AIDS. 20% were unrealistically high for those with HIV/AIDS. 20% indicated that they agreed or strongly agreed the curriculum should include more education about treating patient with HIV/AIDS.

Empirical Findings – Attitudes

- 40% of students agreed they were comfortable providing dental care to patients living with HIV/AIDS.
- 25% disagreed or strongly disagreed that they were comfortable providing dental care.
- 25% were more comfortable treating a patient with a chemical dependency than HIV/AIDS.
- 60% of students agreed or strongly agreed they were concerned about contracting HIV from a patient.
- 80% agreed or strongly agreed that if it became known that patients with HIV/AIDS are treated in their dental setting, some patients might leave their practice.

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