MODULE 8: HIV TRANSMISSION AND PREVENTION

Introduction:

The present session aims to provide learners with basic facts about HIV, modes of HIV transmission, ways to prevent HIV infection and clarify related myths and misconceptions.

Learning Objectives:

The learners will be able to
- Understand the different modes of HIV transmission
- Understand the different ways to protect oneself from HIV infection
- Clarify myths and misconceptions related to HIV transmission
- Understand the impact of HIV on immune system resulting in AIDS
- Understand the impact of HIV on the community and country

Activity 1: Facts about HIV Transmission

Learning Objectives

- To get updated and reliable information on modes of HIV transmission

Material required: List of Statements, Writing Board/Rolling Chart, Chalk / Marker, Power point presentation

Time required: 45 minutes

Notes for the facilitator:

- A list of statements is given below. Distribute the list to every learner or write the statements on the writing board/rolling chart.
- Ask everyone to write true or false against every statement
- After giving them 5 minutes, ask few students about what they have marked and why.
- Have a discussion on each statement and then show them the PPT on “how HIV weakens the immune system”. If possible, also distribute this illustration to all the students.
- End the session by emphasizing on key messages.

List of Statements:

- A person can get HIV by sharing the toilet.
- HIV is preventable but not curable.
- HIV spreads by hugging a HIV positive person.
- A person living with HIV may not show any external signs of infection.
- A person can be infected with HIV by having unprotected sex with infected partner.
• Can be transmitted by sharing infected needles.
• An infected pregnant mother can infect her unborn child.

• HIV can be prevented by observing responsible sexual behaviour.
• Transfusion of untested blood can transmit HIV.
• The only way to know about HIV infection is through the testing of blood.
• Using sterilized/disposable needles can protect persons from HIV infection.
• A HIV infected person can lead a normal life.
• HIV and AIDS both mean the same.
• The possibility of HIV transmission from mother to child can be reduced to the minimum by taking medical help right from conception onwards.
• If a member in a family has HIV, all other members have the possibility of harboring HIV.

**Summing Up:**

• The acronym HIV stands for Human Immunodeficiency Virus
• The acronym AIDS stands for Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
• HIV is transmitted through unprotected sex with infected partner, infected needles, infected blood and blood products and infected mother to unborn child
• HIV does not discriminate, it can infect any one, irrespective of class, color, gender, disability and identity
• Accurate information and not fear or discrimination will help in fighting the infection
• Adolescents have a right to comprehensive education on HIV to help them make more informed choices and adopt safer behaviours
HOW HIV WEAKENS
YOUR IMMUNE SYSTEM

1. White blood cells kill the germs that attack your body.

2. Your immune system is your guard against disease.

3. HIV attacks your immune system by entering your white blood cells.

4. HIV stops your immune system from being able to protect your body.

5. HIV CAN ENTER YOUR BODY THROUGH:

- Sexual intercourse without a condom with an infected partner
- Use of unsterilized needles or syringes infected with HIV
- An infected mother may pass it on to her child before, during or after birth
- Transfusion of blood infected with HIV

Once HIV has weakened your immune system, germs can take over your body, and you become sick.
Activity 2: Clarifying myths and misconceptions

Learning Objectives:

- To clarify myths and misconceptions associated with HIV and AIDS
- To offer corrected and updated information on HIV and AIDS

Time required: 45 minutes

Materials required: Copies of Statements written on separate slips, Writing Board/ Rolling Chart, Chalk/Marker

Notes for the facilitator:

- Divide the class into groups, each group having not more than 5-6 learners
- Give slips with eleven statements to all the groups and ask every group to examine all the statements to find out which one is correct and which is not. The groups will have to reach a consensus on their answer and when the rapporteur of each group presents it has to be clearly stated why a particular statement is correct or why it is wrong
- Explain that by giving the correct answer to every statement the group will get two points, one for saying whether the statement is correct or not and one for explaining the reasons appropriately
- If the students are not able to answer correctly, make sure to provide accurate information

Statements:

- HIV is transmitted through touching, shaking hands, and sharing and eating from the same utensils, coughing and sneezing
- Sitting in the same class room and canteen with people having HIV infection
- Swimming together and playing together with HIV positive persons
- Healthy looking person cannot be HIV positive and he/she need not go for HIV tests
- Insect bites e.g. mosquitoes, bed bugs cannot cause HIV infection
- Donating blood cannot cause HIV infection
- Having HIV infection is the end of life
- AIDS is a curable disease
- Adolescents are immune to HIV
- HIV infected persons should be isolated and one should always be away from them
- HIV positive students should be expelled from school as they may prove dangerous for other students and teachers.
Summing Up:

- Myths and misconceptions perpetuate fear and further lead to stigma and discrimination.
- Clarifying Myths and adding facts helps in demystifying the virus and reduces anxiety.
- Everyone, especially young people have the right to information and education on HIV.

Activity 3: Influence of Values in Decision Making in the Context of HIV/AIDS

Learning Objectives:

- To address prejudices and stigma associated with HIV and AIDS
- To challenge and reduce discrimination against People With HIV/AIDS

Time required: 45 minutes

Materials required: Copies of the Story, Writing board/Rolling Chart, Marker/Chalk

Notes for the facilitator:

- This activity is based on the method of values clarification. The following story may be written on the writing board or rolling chart. Or, it may be ready loudly and clearly.

Rahul lost his father when he was just a child. He is a young man now and lives with his mother. He works in a senior position in a factory. Sonal is a bright young lady and works in a Science Research Lab. She resides in a hostel which is close to Rahul’s house. Rahul and Sonal are very close friends and would like to get married.

But there are problems. Rahul is HIV positive. It was detected during a routine health check up conducted in the factory where he works. The Managing Director of his factory has taken a decision to remove him from service as he is HIV infected.

Sonal too has a problem. She is pregnant. She was in love with Vikram, her colleague in the Research Lab and that relationship resulted in her pregnancy. Vikram went abroad just two months ago. It was only a month after Vikram’s departure that Sonal came to know that he had left her. Sonal was under severe depression. That’s when she came close to Rahul.

Rahul does not know that Sonal is pregnant, nor does Sonal know that Rahul is HIV positive. Dr. Khurana, who is consulted by both of them, knows that Rahul is HIV positive and that Sonal is pregnant. But he does not divulge their respective problems to either of them for ethical reasons. Rahul’s mother is excited to know that he and Sonal want to marry each other. Although she knows that his son is HIV positive, she persuades him to marry Sonal as early as possible so that they may have a child.
• There are six characters in this Story. Ask learners to rank each character based on his/her behavior on a scale of 1-6. Rank 1 is to be given to that character whose behavior according to the learner is the best. Rank 6 is to be given to the character whose behavior the learner considers to be the worst. Accordingly, ranks 2-5 have to given to rest of the characters.

• Draw a table as given below on the Writing Board/Rolling Paper and ask the learners to register Ranks in one column one by one.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHARACTERS</th>
<th>RANKING BY EACH LEARNER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rahul</td>
<td>A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sonal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vikram</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Khurana</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rahul’s Mother</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing Director</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**The alphabets signify the names of participants that can be put in the table to get opinions from different participants**

• Once the ranking by the learners is over, ask each learner to justify the rank given to each of the characters

• Note down the main points put forth by every learner as justification of giving a particular rank to the concerned character

• Facilitator has to use the following processing questions during discussion:
  1. What do you feel about the position of Rahul’s mother?
  2. Is the Managing Director’s action justified?
  3. Did Dr. Khurana take the right decision?
  4. What kind of person does Rahul seem to be?

• While summarizing, articulate the points of views made by learners and create an environment in which learners continue thinking on all the value laden dimensions of the issue.

• While summarizing try to be value neutral and articulate the varied perceptions of stigma and discrimination. It is important to highlight that on any issue, different individuals hold different points of view. It is therefore, not proper to completely reject or accept a viewpoint unless it is subjected to critical analysis.

**Summing Up:**

• Values are integral to the understanding of issues, especially those related to topics that are sensitive and taboo.

• All people are informed by values but personal values should at no point influence or impact the lives of people, negatively.
• Every individual has certain values close to her/him. Therefore, there is no one right or one wrong way of looking at things.
• It is illegal to test any individual for HIV without his/her informed consent.
• HIV positive status cannot form the basis for termination from job.
• People living with HIV/AIDS can lead healthy and fulfilling lives and continue to contribute to the society. They should not be discriminated against.
FACT SHEET

How is HIV transmitted?

Information from persons testing positive for HIV at the Integrated Counselling and Testing Centres across the country during 2009-10 shows that 87.1% of HIV infections are still occurring through heterosexual route of transmission while parent to child transmission accounts for 5.4% of HIV cases detected, injecting drug use 1.5%, men who have sex with men 1.5% and contaminated blood and blood products account for 1%.

Unprotected Sex

- The most common route of transmission is unprotected sex with an infected partner. It accounts for nearly 80-90 per cent of the world's HIV infections
- HIV is present in semen and in cervical and vaginal fluids. Vagina and penis provide entry points to the virus inside the body
- HIV has been described as a Sexually Transmitted Infection. Transmission is made easier in the presence of other STIs, particularly genital ulcer diseases such as cancroids and syphilis.
- In the presence of an STI, particularly where a sore is present, the risk of contracting HIV during unprotected sex with an infected person is very high.

Infected mother to new-born child

- HIV can be transmitted by a woman with HIV to her child before or during birth and after birth. Before birth, it may be transmitted across the placenta to the foetus and during birth it may be transmitted through the mother's blood.
- Most of the children with HIV do not survive for longer than 2-5 years, if they do not receive any drug.

Blood

- As a virus, which lives in the blood, HIV may be transmitted by the transfusion of blood from an infected donor. That is why it has been made mandatory for every blood collection centre to conduct HIV test before collecting blood from a donor.
- HIV can also be transmitted through the use of needles, syringes, blades, knives, surgical instruments and other piercing instruments that have been used on an infected person, without proper sterilization. This can also be transmitted through instruments used for circumcision, tattooing, acupuncture, ear piercing and traditional healing practices.
- The possibility of transmission of HIV through normal injections in clinics and hospitals is extremely low, as it is essential for clinics and hospitals to use sterilized syringes and needles.
- Sharing of needles and syringes among injecting drug users is common. Such behaviour is risky from the point of view of acquiring and transmitting HIV infection as infected needles can easily transmit the virus through blood.
How is HIV not transmitted?

It is very important to know and remember that HIV is not transmitted:
- By shaking hands
- Kissing and hugging
- Sharing cups, plates and other eating utensils
- Sharing toilet and bathroom facilities
- Through coughing or sneezing or through the air we breathe
- Sitting in the same class room or canteen
- Sharing work instruments or machinery
- Swimming together or playing together
- Donating blood to the Blood Bank (with sterilized needles)
- Bites by insects, e.g. mosquitoes, bed bugs, etc.

One cannot get HIV/AIDS through everyday social contact with a person infected with HIV.

HIV and AIDS: PREVENTION

- There is no preventive vaccine or cure. The only option available today is to prevent it by observing practices that are safe.

Responsible Sexual Behaviour:

The basic approach that has been promoted in the context of HIV prevention is:
- Abstinence: The person does not have sex. It is the only 100% safe way of protection against pregnancy, STIs and HIV
- Be faithful: Sex with only one uninfected partner, i.e. monogamous relationships
- Correct and consistent use of condoms provides protection against pregnancy, HIV and STIs

Use of Safe Blood and instruments:

- **Use of only sterilized instruments**: Instruments which are used to draw blood and are used in activities such as circumcision, tattooing or ear piercing can be cleaned by leaving them in a solution of bleach (Bleach contains chemicals with oxidizing bleaching action such as sodium hydrochloride and chlorine). These chemicals are also good disinfectants and instruments can be kept immersed in these chemicals (powder or liquid) in the ratio of 1 part chemical to 9 parts of water for 30 minutes or boiled in water for 20 minutes.
- **Use of Sterilized syringes and needles**: If an injection is needed, one must ensure that the syringe and the needle are disposable or are properly sterilized. There should never be any sharing of needles and syringes while taking an Injection.
- **Blood safety**: The Blood Safety Programme in the country is an integral part of the National AIDS Control Programme. There are a large number of Blood Banks, both government and non-government, which collect and supply safe blood.
HIV Zonal Blood Testing Centres have been set up in a number of cities and towns of the
country. The centres receive samples of blood from Blood Banks for HIV testing. Under the
Drugs and Cosmetics Act 1940 (amended till 1995), it is mandatory to test every unit of blood
for HIV. The Zonal Blood Testing centres/district level Blood Banks have been provided with
testing kits and the necessary equipment for conducting tests. The blood of a donor is discarded,
if it is tested HIV positive.

In order to know the prevalence and progression of HIV in the community and in the country as
a whole, the mechanism of sentinel surveillance has been established. This is being done through
screening of the blood samples, collected from sentinel sites including STD clinics, antenatal
clinics, drug de-addiction clinics, etc. The surveillance data from different States is compiled at
the national level.

Efforts are also being made to augment voluntary blood donations and to phase out professional
blood donors. **There is need to promote voluntary blood donation, as it is safer and less
likely to be infected with HIV.**

**Mother-to-Child:**
Termination of pregnancy was probably the only solution to prevent vertical transmission.
Although this option is relevant even today, most HIV positive mothers in our country opt to
continue pregnancy due to social pressures and longing for motherhood. Also, registration for
antenatal care and subsequent diagnosis of seropositivity takes place late in pregnancy, well
beyond the safe limit of 20 weeks for a voluntary termination of pregnancy. Antiretroviral
treatment remains the main backbone strategy for preventing MTCT all through pregnancy.

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