**The Risk of HIV Infection due to Occupational Exposure among Health Care Workers in the Hospitals of Kathmandu and Pokhara: A Hospital Based Study**

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**Background**

The incidence of HIV/AIDS is increasing in an alarming manner. There are more than 40 million cases worldwide. In Nepal alone it is estimated that there are about 60,000 cases. Regardless of numerous activities of information, education and communication, there is still high level of social stigma and fear towards this disease. There is reluctance or avoidance from the part of the health care workers in taking care of HIV/AIDS patients, mainly due to fear of transmission. There is real, although low, risk of HIV transmission due to occupational exposure. This study will determine the risk of HIV infection due to occupational exposure in health care workers of hospitals of Kathmandu and Pokhara.

**Methods**

It was a cross-sectional descriptive study carried out in Tribhuwan University Teaching Hospital, Bir Hospital, Western Regional Hospital and B and B hospital. The study population was the health care workers of the hospitals selected by simple random sampling. The data was collected through questionnaire and observation. Altogether 200 health workers were interviewed. The collected data was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Science 10.

**Results**

More than 79% of the health workers were exposed to blood or bloody fluids of the patients by prick, cut, splash and touch within the period of 1 month in the hospitals where they worked. The risk of HIv transmission per health worker per year due to percutaneous exposure was 0.006%. The health workers were not aware of the magnitude of HIV problems as only one third of the health workers knew the estimated number of HIV/AIDS patients worldwide and Nepal. The majority of health workers, 8 out of 10 have taken care of HIV patients. 64.5% of the health workers said that inadequate personal protective practices were the most important risk factor in the transmission of HIV in the workplace. Four out of ten health workers agreed that the health workers perception of fear of contracting AIDS is an important factor due to which the health worker may avoid giving health care.

**Conclusions**

Interventions are necessary in every aspect of the disease and proper management of the disease is one of the most important for the effective control and prevention of HIV/AIDS.

**Keywords:** health care workers; HIV/AIDS; occupational exposure; risk.