

# **HIV Knowledge and Awareness**

## **An HIV and AIDS quiz conducted by *Wake Up Pune***

### **Introduction**

This report presents the findings of a quiz conducted at a *Wake Up Pune* event on World AIDS Day, 2007. The purpose of the quiz was to assess the levels of HIV knowledge and awareness of participants at *Wake Up Pune* events in order to better understand our audience and fine-tune our message in effectively reaching them.

### **Background**

Launched in November 2006, *Wake Up Pune* is a coalition of NGOs and representatives from civil society working to spread awareness about HIV and AIDS in the city of Pune, India. *Wake up Pune* is the first and only campaign directed across the entire city of Pune targeted at alerting people to the risks of HIV, attempting to bring about a change in risk behaviour and most importantly in breaking the cycle of Silence, Ignorance, Fear, Stigma and Discrimination surrounding HIV.

### **Methods**

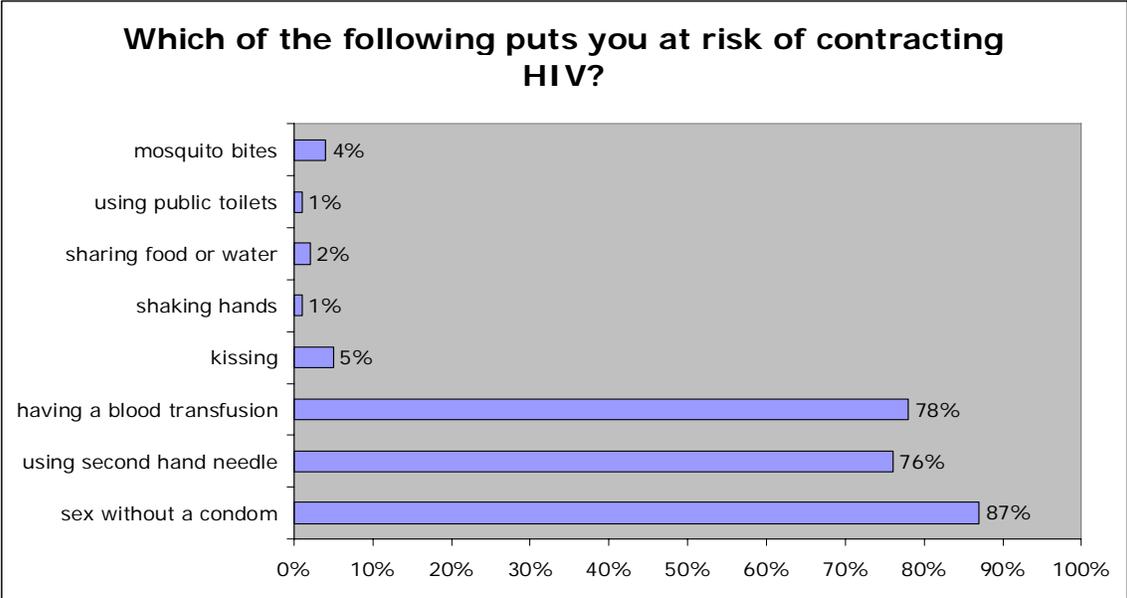
The quiz was conducted on December 1, 2007 by members of *Wake Up Pune* at the World AIDS Day event held at Mariplex Cinema and Gold Adlabs in Pune. The tool was compiled by the member NGOs. The results were obtained via participant completed questionnaires. Over 140 people were surveyed. The respondents were from a floating population of individuals frequenting the shopping mall and cinema.

### **Basic Knowledge of HIV**

The quiz tested basic levels of knowledge on HIV. On some information questions, the participants' level of knowledge was high. 91% of people knew HIV stands for Human Immunodeficiency Virus. 82% of people said that with good nutrition and antiretroviral drugs it is possible to live a healthy life with HIV for many years. Participants were also aware of the risky and non-risky behaviours for contracting HIV. More than three

quarters of respondents knew that having a blood transfusion, using a secondhand needle and having sex without a condom puts you at risk for HIV. [fig.1] And fewer than 5% thought that kissing, shaking hands, sharing food or water, using public toilets or mosquito bites were risky.

Figure 1



While the participants had an adequately high level of knowledge on transmission methods, their information levels were not as high as might be expected, with up to a quarter of people unaware that a certain behaviour was risky. Added to this, there were greater levels of misinformation on other basic questions about HIV. 28% of people thought that even when an HIV positive woman takes the appropriate drugs and does not breastfeed, there is a 50 or 75% chance that her newborn baby will be HIV positive. In reality, only a third of babies born to positive woman with no intervention are HIV positive. Additionally 23% of people didn't know the correct difference between HIV and AIDS. The results indicate that people know that HIV is a virus but not clearly what AIDS is. When asked if HIV could be cured, 25% of people thought there is a cure for HIV. **If large numbers of people believe there is a cure for HIV, what motivation will they have for not engaging in risky behaviour, even if they are aware of the transmission methods?**

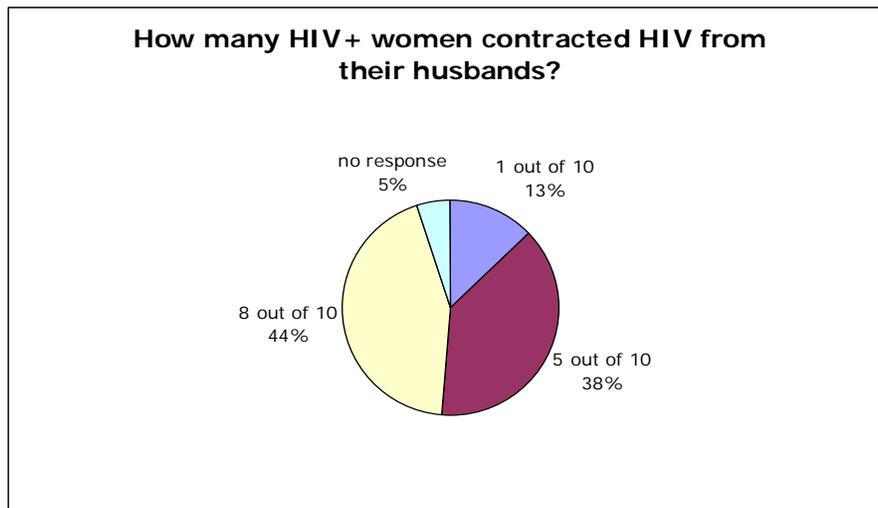
## **Beliefs about affected and infected groups**

The quiz also questioned participants' knowledge about individuals affected and infected by HIV in India. While respondents were aware of *what* the risks are for contracting HIV, the results show there are still prejudices evident in the beliefs of *who* is at risk for HIV.

Generally, participants showed lower levels of ignorance about who could be affected by HIV. 77% of people said there was no way to tell if someone had HIV by looking at them. When asked which groups HIV could affect, a high percentage of people reported that HIV could affect a wide range of groups including straight men, woman, children and the well educated. In addition 73% of respondents were right in saying that one third of all new infections in India were in individuals aged 15-24.

However, only 40% of people correctly identified heterosexual sex as the primary method of transmission in Maharashtra. HIV is still seen as a disease that primarily affects specific groups seen to have lower morals than the majority of society, such as drug users or MSMs. Only 44% of participants said that 8 out of 10 woman contract HIV from their husbands. [fig 2] Not only is this result an indication of the levels of denial about the continued helplessness of woman in determining their sexual choices and the sustained dominance of patriarchy in our society, but also it displays the persistent incorrect belief that 'normal' families are not a factor in the spread of HIV. Furthermore it suggests that participants believe most HIV positive woman to be from one of the above 'degenerate,' marginalized groups such as Commercial Sex Workers, despite the fact that Female Sex Workers make up less than 1% of the entire HIV infected female population (NACO 2003 report).

Figure 2



The presence of stigma is evident in the disconnect in the quiz results between knowledge over the risks of certain behaviour and beliefs about who is going to engage in those type of actions. This really indicates continued social beliefs about behaviour and morality. People may express awareness and acceptance but they still associate HIV with 'low' sexual or social behaviour and therefore also with the types of people who are thought more likely to act in those ways.

## The HIV Burden in India and the World

Finally the quiz tested participant knowledge about the severity of the HIV problem in Maharashtra, India and worldwide. There was a grasp of the magnitude and scope of the HIV epidemic among participants. 85% of people knew Maharashtra has one of the top five highest prevalence rates of HIV in India. This indicates an acknowledgement of the seriousness of HIV close to home. People are also aware of the history of HIV in India, with a large percentage (42%) knowing that that first case of HIV in India was discovered in 1986. A majority of people (55%) correctly identified that the estimated amount of people living with HIV worldwide is 33 million.

Despite this awareness, the results show a disconnect between acknowledging the magnitude of the HIV/AIDS problem worldwide, in India and in Maharashtra and

accepting the frightening future HIV may hold for the younger generations in the coming decades. If participants are aware that a large percentage of newly infected people are the young generation, as the section 'Beliefs about affected and infected groups' shows, and they are aware that millions have died of AIDS in India and that millions more are affected and infected by HIV in India and Maharashtra, they seem to perceive HIV as a cross-generational, cross-class nationwide and worldwide problem. **Despite this reported grasp of the history and current realities of HIV, how is the fight against HIV supposed to progress in the ways it needs to when many still believe, due to misinformation and stigma, that a cure for HIV exists and that HIV is prevalent mainly among certain minority and excluded groups?**

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## **Conclusion**

The results show that respondents are aware of the methods of HIV transmission. In addition there is recognition about the severity and extent of the HIV burden in India and around the world. However this knowledge is contrasted with continued prejudiced beliefs about who HIV is affecting and gaps in basic levels of knowledge that help to explain how continued attitude and ideas about HIV have aided in the spread of infection and hinder the fight against HIV. **What can be taken from the quiz is that awareness alone doesn't always lead to changed attitudes and understanding.**

It is something to bear in mind that the results might have been affected by the fact that the quiz was conducted on World AIDS Day, when the issue of HIV had been receiving a large amount of coverage and publicity. Participants may have been subject to greater degree of exposure to information about HIV either leading up to the day in the wider media or at the event itself. It would be interesting to see if results differ would the quiz to be conducted at the same location but on a different date.



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## HIV Knowledge and Awareness Questionnaire

What does HIV stand for?

- a. Highly Infectious Virus
- b. Human and Insect Virus
- c. Human Immunodeficiency Virus

How can you tell if someone is HIV+?

- a. They look ill
- b. There is no clear way to tell
- c. They wear a sign saying HIV+

Which of the following puts you at risk of contracting HIV?

- a. Kissing
- b. Sex without a condom
- c. Shaking hands
- d. Sharing food or water
- e. Mosquito bites
- f. Having a blood transfusion
- g. Using a second hand needle
- h. Using public toilets

Worldwide, how many people are estimated to be living with HIV?

- a. 33 million
- b. 21 million
- c. 5 million

What is the difference between HIV and AIDS?

- a. HIV is a virus and AIDS is a bacteria
- b. HIV is the virus that left unchecked will lead to AIDS
- c. They are two different names for the same thing

Which of the following groups does HIV affect?

- a. Children
- b. Heterosexual men
- c. Women
- d. Well educated individuals
- e. All of the above

Maharashtra state has one of the top 5 highest prevalence rates of HIV in India

- a. True
- b. False

Heterosexual sex is responsible for what percentage of transmissions in Maharashtra?

- a. 35%
- b. 60%
- c. 85%

The first case of HIV in India was discovered in which year?

- a. 1986
- b. 1978
- c. 1982
- d. 1990

If a HIV+ woman takes the appropriate drugs and does not breast feed what are the chances her new born baby will be HIV+

- a. 75%
- b. 50%
- c. 20%
- d. Less than 2%

What percentage of new HIV infections affect 15-29 year olds in India

- a. 33%
- b. 10%
- c. 5%

How many HIV+ women contracted HIV from their husbands?

- a. 1 out of Ten
- b. 5 out of Ten
- c. 8 out of Ten

There is no cure for HIV.

- a. True
- b. False

With good nutrition and antiretroviral drugs it is possible to live a healthy life with HIV for many years?

- a. True
- b. False

It has been estimated that since discovering AIDS in India, nearly 3 million have died.

Left unchecked, the number of AIDS related deaths by 2015 in India has been projected as what?

- a. 6 million people
- b. 9 million people
- c. 12 million people

What has become an internationally recognized symbol for AIDS awareness?

- a. A white ribbon
- b. A red hair band
- c. A red ribbon
- d. Smiling