

# ASSESSMENT OF KNOWLEDGE REGARDING SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS AMONG HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN THRISSUR EDUCATIONAL SUB DISTRICT – A CROSS SECTIONAL STUDY

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**Background:** India is in the grip of an HIV epidemic with youth being an important vulnerable population. Little is known about the knowledge about sexual health and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) among young people. **Objective:** To determine the knowledge about STIs among high school students of Thrissur sub-district and its association with their socio-demographic characteristics. **Methods:** This was a descriptive cross-sectional questionnaire based study. Five hundred and twenty six students selected from public and private secondary schools in Thrissur educational sub district were recruited using a multistage sampling technique. **Results:** Four hundred fifty five (86.5%) students correctly identified HIV as a STI whereas only 94(17.9%) identified syphilis, 91(17.3%) identified herpes simplex, 61(11.6%) identified trichomoniasis, 125(23.8%) identified gonorrhoea and 72(13.7%) identified chlamydia as one. 313(59.5%) students had poor knowledge and 213(40.5%) had good knowledge about STI. Students of 10<sup>th</sup> standard had a higher proportion of good knowledge compared to 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> standard students. Difference in knowledge about STDs among different schools was also statistically significant with CBSE school showing the highest level of knowledge. The multivariate logistic regression model identified internet (OR, 1.567; 95% CI, 1.019 – 2.411; p=0.041) and health worker (OR, 1.935; 95% CI, 1.224 – 3.061; p=0.005) as independent factors, which helped to acquire more knowledge regarding STI. **Conclusion:** In spite of efforts over the past two decades in STI prevention, this epidemic still presents a serious challenge to societies around the world, including India. Current status of sexual education in schools needs to be improved.