

World AIDS Day Campaign in Iran: A Population-Based Study

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Abstract

Background: This was a population-based study to examine whether the campaign for World AIDS Day 2005 in Iran was successful.

Methods: A random sample of the general population was asked whether they had seen the campaign and knew the message. They were also asked whether it was attractive; there was anything offensive, whether the campaign could raise awareness, and how they rated the campaign. In all 1215 individuals were approached and 1014 agreed to take part in the study.

Results: Only 43% (n = 435) said that they had seen the campaign. Of those who had seen the campaign 79% knew the subject and 24% acknowledged the main message correctly. Only 27% said it was very attention getting or eye-catching, 64% said the campaign could raise awareness but 75% said the message was unclear, and confusing. A few respondents (23%) rated that the campaign overall looked good or very good.

Conclusion: The findings suggest that if the World AIDS Day is an opportunity to give visibility to the problem, then there is an urgent need to think seriously to choose other approaches for raising global awareness on the state of the epidemic in Iran and elsewhere

Keywords: *AIDS, Health education campaign, World AIDS Day, Publicity, Iran*

Introduction

The theme for World AIDS Day 2005 was "Stop AIDS. Keep the Promise". The campaign aimed to ensure that the world communities are actively responding to their promises to stop AIDS. The joint United Nations program on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) 2006 report on the global AIDS epidemic states that the available data show that the epidemics are growing in several countries including Iran. In addition the report indicates that in Iran high levels of HIV infection (around 15%) are being found in male injecting drug users attending drug treatment centers in Tehran (the capital). Most of the injecting drug users were sexually active and exchanging money for sex was common, however only half had ever used a condom (1). This paper reports the results from a study carried out to evaluate the campaign in Iran.

Material and Methods

This was a population-based study. A random sample of the general population aged 15 yr and

over in Tehran was entered into the study. The Iranian Students' Polling Agency (ISPA) carried out the sample size calculation and recruitment. For the study purposes a picture of the campaign without any written materials was shown to each respondent (Fig. 1). The main text on the poster was "Let's promise and keep the promise. Let's know more about AIDS." They were interviewed to see whether they had seen the campaign and knew the message. They were also asked whether it was attractive; there was anything offensive, whether the campaign could raise awareness, and how they rated the campaign.

Results

In all 1215 individuals were approached and 1014 (83%) agreed to take part in the study. The mean age of the respondents was 36.5 (SD= 9.4) years, mostly were male (52%), and had secondary educational level or above (64%). Only 43% (n= 435) said that they had seen the campaign and the remaining 57% said did not. Of those who had seen

the campaign 79% knew the subject and 24% acknowledged the main message correctly. Only 27% said it was very attention getting or eye-catching, 55% said that the campaign was meant for someone like themselves, 64% said the campaign could raise awareness but 75% said the message was unclear, and confusing although 84% said it was not offensive, embarrassing or annoying. A few respondents (23%) rated that the campaign overall looked good or very good. There were significant differences between those who seen the campaign and those who did not. Those who seen the campaign were more likely to be never married ($\chi^2= 7.3$, $df= 1$, $P= 0.007$) and younger (t -value= -2.5 , $P= 0.01$). We did cross tabulation analysis and there were no significant association between demographic variables and the

study outcomes except for the relationship between demographic variables and the indication of main message correctly. Those who acknowledged the main message correctly were female ($P= 0.003$), married ($P= 0.007$) and relatively older ($P= 0.002$).

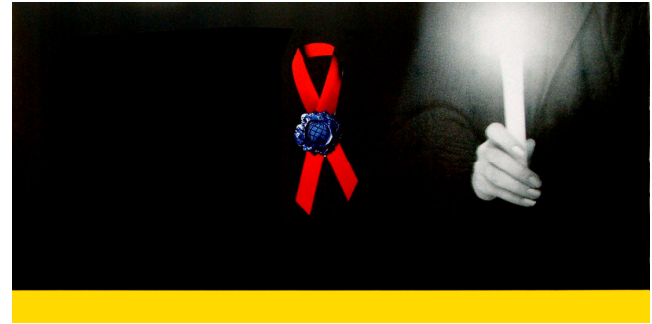


Fig. 1: A picture of the campaign without any written material

Table 1: The study main findings (n= 435)

| | | No. | % |
|---|----------------------|-----|----|
| Did you know the topic | Yes | 344 | 79 |
| | No | 91 | 21 |
| What did you think was the main message of the campaign (open question) | Correct answers | 104 | 24 |
| | Wrong answers | 331 | 76 |
| Was the campaign attention getting or eye-catching | Very | 117 | 27 |
| | Moderately | 43 | 10 |
| | Not very | 83 | 19 |
| | Not at all | 192 | 44 |
| Did you think the campaign was meant for someone like you | Definitely | 143 | 33 |
| | Probably | 97 | 22 |
| | Probably not | 109 | 25 |
| | Definitely not | 86 | 20 |
| Was there anything you found confusing or unclear | Yes | 326 | 75 |
| | No | 109 | 25 |
| Did you find anything offensive, embarrassing or annoying | Yes | 70 | 16 |
| | No | 365 | 84 |
| Did you think the campaign could raise awareness | Yes | 278 | 64 |
| | No | 122 | 28 |
| | I don't know | 35 | 8 |
| How would you rate the way the campaign looked overall | Very good | 14 | 3 |
| | Good | 86 | 20 |
| | Neither good nor bad | 117 | 27 |
| | Poor | 153 | 35 |
| | Very Poor | 65 | 15 |

Discussion

This was a population based study with a simple design to evaluate the World AIDS Days Campaign in Iran. In general the findings from this study indicated that many did not see the campaign and those who saw the campaign although knew the subject, could not identify the main message correctly. There was an indirect measure to indicate to what extent the respondents saw themselves as the target audience. Almost 45% said that they did not see themselves as the target of the campaign (Table 1). This is a relatively high proportion and might reflect the fact that the young people still do not feel vulnerable to AIDS and fail to see it as a disease that even affect heterosexual people (2). In addition, it has been shown that the initial response in almost every country of Asia was denial focusing on HIV/AIDS as an imported rather than indigenous disease (3). As it was suggested HIV/AIDS prevention efforts would benefit from: better reporting of media campaign components and outcomes; more systematic evaluation; greater integration of theory; and increased attention to community wide intervention strategies (4).

We found that 64% of the respondents said that the campaign could raise awareness about HIV and AIDS. This, to some extent, might indicate that many people were agreeing with such publicities. The positive attitudes towards AIDS campaigns in Iran is important and could be seen an extra assets to get the message across. Evidence suggests that in general HIV/AIDS related knowl-

edge in Iran is relatively high and people have positive attitudes towards AIDS (5).

In conclusion, if the World AIDS Day is an opportunity to give visibility to the problem, then there is an urgent need to think seriously to choose other approaches for raising global awareness on the state of the epidemic in Iran and elsewhere.

Acknowledgements

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interests.

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