



Roles of Nurses to Provide HIV Care Services to Vulnerable Communities of India

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Abstract

The role of nurses is significant for providing healthcare services among HIV sufferers by ensuring the health and well-being of individuals living with the virus. Nurses are responsible for conducting testing and counselling among people who are suffering from HIV. Administering antiretroviral therapy (ART), providing other medications and monitoring different side effects among the HIV patients are the most important role of nurses. Nurses are also responsible for improving education and awareness about HIV among people. Awareness about HIV helps people to prevent themselves to get affected by the virus. Nurses have the ability to improve the health of sufferers through their knowledge, compassionate care and commitment to patient-centred care. The present study focuses on the role of nurses in providing valuable HIV care services to the vulnerable communities of India. In order to evaluate the role of nurses, the secondary qualitative research has been conducted which enables researchers to evaluate the topic in a systematic and effective manner.

Keywords: Nurse, healthcare, HIV, Infection, Patients, care services, Nursing practice, HIV sufferers

1. Introduction & Background

Nurses are an integrated part of health care service providers in any country. Nurses play a critical role in providing healthcare facilities to people who are living with the Human immunodeficiency Virus (HIV). They serve as an essential part of healthcare facilities and work closely with physicians and other healthcare experts. Nurses ensure that HIV sufferers receive the best possible care to improve their health. The role of nurses in providing care to HIV sufferers is both complex and diverse and encompasses a wide range of responsibilities such as administering and providing antiretroviral therapy. This article tries to focus on the role of nurses in providing healthcare facilities to individuals who are suffering from HIV. Nurses are an essential part of healthcare facilities and nurses have a huge role in providing treatment and other healthcare assistance to individuals who are suffering from HIV in India [1].

According to the HIV estimates report of 2019, the government of India estimates around 23.49 lakh people are living with HIV in 2019 [2]. Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh are the most affected states that have a huge number of HIV sufferers. Therefore, there is a huge requirement for HIV care facilities to reduce the number of sufferers and nurses have the potential to improve the situation.

2. Aim and objectives of the study

The primary aim of the study is to evaluate the role of nurses in providing healthcare facilities to HIV sufferers in India.

Objectives

- To evaluate the impact of HIV among the vulnerable communities of India
- To identify the knowledge practices to improve HIV knowledge among the people
- To determine the role of nurses in providing HIV care services to vulnerable communities in India

3. Significance of the study

HIV is an emerging threat in India and AIDS is the most dangerous disease in the history of mankind. According to different reports in India, HIV sufferers are increasing day by day. In order to provide healthcare services among the sufferers and increase awareness about HIV among people, nurses play a significant role. Therefore, identifying the role of nurses in providing healthcare services to HIV sufferers is essential and this objective of the present study makes the study relevant for the betterment of mankind.

4. Materials and methods

Research methods are an essential part of the study that provides a structure for formulating the overall research process. The selection of proper methods enables researchers to analyse the research topic in a systematic and relevant way which makes research outcomes more fruitful. The primary focus of the research methodology is to select a proper data collection and analysis process which helps to formulate the overall research process [3]. There are two major types of data collection processes such as primary data collection and secondary data collection. The process of the primary collection deals with the data sets that are collected by the researchers whereas secondary data collection deals with the data sets that are collected from secondary sources such as previous research articles, peer-reviewed journals, authentic websites and newspaper articles.

The secondary data collection method is adopted here in this study that provides a clear understanding of the topic which is important to make the research study relevant to their objectives. In order to maintain authenticity and originality peer-reviewed articles, research papers, government websites, and newspaper articles that are published after 2018 are taken here for collecting data. Journal articles and newspapers that are published before 2018 are avoided for data collection which improves the relevance of the study. Research design is also an important part of a research study that provides a clear structure to the study which is important to improve research outcomes [4]. There are different types of research design which include quantitative and qualitative research design. The quantitative research design encompasses numeric and statistics during data collection procedures. On the other hand, the qualitative design of the study encompasses the individual's opinion and different narratives which provides insight into the research topic [5].

The secondary qualitative research design is followed here in this study which helps to enhance the knowledge about the role of nurses in providing healthcare facilities to HIV sufferers in India. Data analysis is an essential part of a research study that provides a clear overview by analysing the collected data. Thematic analysis is done here in this study to improve knowledge about the role of nurses in providing healthcare to the people of the Indian community who are suffering from HIV. Authentic journal articles and previous research papers are critically evaluated in this study to derive themes that are relevant to the present study which improves the overall understanding and makes the research relevant to wider objectives.

5. Results

5.1 Impact of HIV among the vulnerable communities of India

HIV is a destructive disease that has the prospective to kill millions, obstruct economic growth, and also transform the structure of vulnerable communities in India as it swiftly straightens out across the world. The government of India evaluates that according to the record of the year 2019, there were near about **23.49 lakh** Indians living with this dangerous disease [6]. It has been observed that in India, HIV infection appears mainly because of meeting high-risk behaviours. It includes “unprotected homosexual behaviour”, “unprotected heterosexual behaviour”, and “unsafe injecting drug use behaviour”. Thus in India, due to a lack of dedicated hospitals, the treatment option for HIV becomes limited and identified as a challenge for the population.

Observing the rising number of HIV-affected people, especially in vulnerable communities, there are created near about **570** “*Anti-retroviral treatment (ART) Centres*” as well as **1264** “*Link ART Centres*” under the “*National AIDS Control Programme (NACP)*” of the Indian Government [6]. Generally, HIV is a disease that damages the cells and the ability of the human body to fight against any kind of infections. This disease increases vulnerability which leads to changes in human behaviour that are considered reciprocal and self-reinforcing. India is identified as the third-largest load of HIV infection in the world [7]. As India is a lower-middle-income country the treatment regarding this remains limited. In addition to that, in rural areas, the majority of the population has become unaware of HIV and its impact which is also a major reason for the growing patient number. Thus, the world has committed to finishing the HIV pandemic by 2030.

In India, the “*National AIDS Control Organisation (NACO)*” has been identified as the controller of the HIV management process which desires to extend medical therapy among patients. On the contrary, the government of India still remains to fail in establishing effective policies to balance the HIV population. The vulnerable population like sex workers is strictly reluctant to seek any kind of medical therapy for HIV. High-risk HIV communities need a multispectral, sensitive, and multi-pronged response [8]. Following the rapid growth of HIV infection in India, it is very important to have proper knowledge regarding this. In this regard, the Indian government can play a vital role to support the different campaigns to acknowledge the vulnerable communities of India to fight against destructive disease and keep a healthy population growth.

5.2 Nursing practice to improve HIV knowledge

In order to improve the health condition of an individual patient affected by HIV infection, the role of the nurse is identified as crucial. Providing the patient with evidence-based

education, the nurse is also playing a vital role by that patient can take perfect decisions to improve their health condition. It has been considered that in this recent era “antiretroviral therapy (ART) management” has become proficiency for nursing practice in HIV [9]. Nurses incorporate specific skills and knowledge regarding HIV infection into everyday practices. Especially when delivering care, it is very important to consider the holistic need of the patients. As HIV patients remain in critical condition, nurses are engaged in providing affecting information to the patients on available treatment options for curing HIV infections. In addition to that, it is also essential to follow cultural safety by following the principles of the nurses.

Continuation in nursing practice is very important, especially in treating HIV infection as the medicines have several side effects. In this regard, informing patients about the potential side effects is also vital to understand the effectiveness. Generally, nurses have knowledge about drug-to-drug interactions connected with the ART process. Along with this, having the knowledge regarding the result of a declining CD4+ T-cell count and its common opportunities for infections can save the patient from facing more difficult situations [10]. Nurses help the patient in the process of interpreting the system of diagnostic tests for HIV to understand its antibody testing possibilities. For all the potential tests that can be provided during the treatment process of HIV, it is the responsibility of the nurse to inform the patient and the family members about this.

Under the nursing practice, it has become one of the responsibilities that nurses need to understand the importance of both pre as well as post-test counselling for HIV testing that can help the patient understand the potential outcome in advance and they can cooperate in the entire treatment procedure. In addition to that, nurses also have knowledge regarding the ways to prevent “vertical transmission”, especially for pregnant women living with HIV [11]. Following the organisational policies nurse can provide the right treatment option to cure HIV patients. Nurses are the key tools that can support the en-of-life-care to dealing with HIV infection and also help in serving quality medical education to make the patient comfortable with the process.

5.3 Role of nurses to provide HIV care services to the vulnerable communities of India

Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) is an emerging problem in India and it is a major threat among people who are already suffering from other diseases. Nurses have a huge role in providing basic and intensive healthcare facilities to people who are suffering from HIV. Nurses play a significant role in providing HIV care to sufferers by collaborating with physicians and other healthcare experts. Testing, treatment, preventive education and advocacy are the major aspects where nurses play a crucial role to improve the situation of HIV in India. Testing and counselling are essential parts of HIV services that are important to detect the diseases among the patients [12]. Nowadays advanced education and training enable nurses to perform counselling among patients who are suffering from different symptoms of HIV.

Testing is also an important part of detecting HIV among patients. Nurses are nowadays performing different tests such as antibody tests, and nucleic acid tests that help them to detect HIV in patients. Performing these tests enables nurses to make a plan of treatment that helps them to provide different HIV services to the sufferers. Treatment and care is an

essential part of healthcare service that is important to reduce the underlying symptoms of the patients and helps to remove diseases from the body. Nurses play an important role to provide treatments to patients who are suffering from HIV [13]. They assist doctors in the overall treatment process by giving time to time medications and other treatments such as antiretroviral therapy to the patients. Nurses also observe side effects and other parameters of the patient's body to reduce different implications during the treatment process.

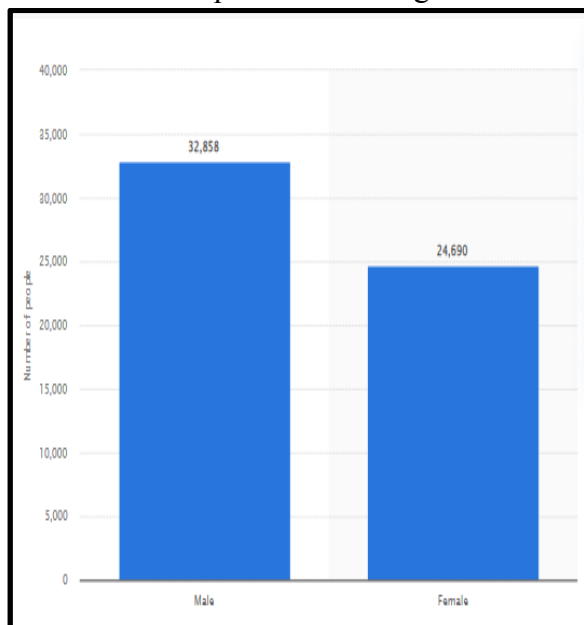


Figure 1: Annual new cases of HIV in India 2020

(Source: [15])

Besides, nurses have an important role in improving knowledge among the vulnerable communities in India. In India, around 24 lakh people still have HIV which signifies there is a lack of education about HIV which increases the infection rate among vulnerable people in India [14]. In 2020 around 59 thousand new cases are reported in India among them 32,858 are male and the rest are female [15]. Nurses nowadays help to make people aware of HIV infections which help people to understand the HIV spreading patterns and key symptoms which is important to protect vulnerable people from getting infected. Collaboration and advocacy are other important roles of nurses to provide multiple healthcare services to HIV sufferers. Nurses nowadays assist other healthcare experts and the government to provide healthcare facilities in the rural and urban areas of India. Nurses advocate different government programmes which promote health and well-being among HIV sufferers.

6. Discussion

HIV is a destructive disease in developing countries like India and the disease kills millions of lives every year. HIV disease also obstructs economic growth in developing countries and transforms the structure of vulnerable communities in India. According to the report published by the government of India, around 23.49 lakh Indians have HIV which affects their daily activities [16]. There are multiple ways the diseases spread over the huge population of India and have high risk among the vulnerable communities who don't have enough education and knowledge about the disease. Unprotected sexual behaviours and unsafe injecting procedures are the cause of the spreading of HIV among people. The lack of dedicated hospitals and treatment options is the major challenge in India which increases the

mortality rate among the sufferers. Due to the increasing mortality rate among the sufferers, the government of India is trying to open a huge number of testing and treatment centres.

The government opened nearly 570 Anti-retroviral treatment (ART) centres and 1264 link art centres under the National aids control programme [17]. The National AIDS control organisation (NACO) has been identified as the controller of HIV management. Despite these organisations, the government of India has failed to establish multiple effective policies to reduce HIV infections in the community. Hence, it can be perceived that the government needs more trained healthcare experts such as physicians, nurses and paramedical experts to deal with HIV. Nurses play a significant role in providing healthcare services among HIV sufferers. Providing the sufferer's evidence-based treatments is the main treatment process to give people a healthy and HIV-free life. Nurses also play a significant role to educate people about HIV infection and key symptoms which help them to maintain a healthy life. It has been considered that in the present scenario “antiretroviral therapy (ART) management” has become proficient for nursing practices in HIV.

Nowadays nurses are skilled enough and they have a huge knowledge of different medical practices which enables them to provide good healthcare services that help to reduce the mortality rate due to HIV in the community. The nurse plays a significant role especially in treating people who have HIV infections [18]. Presently nurses have adequate knowledge about different medications and their side effects which makes the ability to provide different drug-related information effective to HIV sufferers. On the other hand, nurses have a crucial role in improving awareness among people. They help to provide proper sex education and HIV-related awareness to the people which help to reduce the HIV infection rate in society. Having knowledge about the result of a declining CD4+ T-cell count and its common opportunities for infections can save the patient from facing more difficult situations.

HIV is an emerging problem among the vulnerable communities in India and nurses have a huge role in improving health among HIV sufferers in India. They have multiple roles which include testing, treatment, preventive education and advocacy. Nurses are an integral part of HIV treatment as they assist doctors and other healthcare professionals to provide good HIV services to the people. Besides treatment nurses have an adequate role in improving HIV-related awareness among people which helps to improve health among the people and keep them away from diseases such as AIDS [18]. Nurses also play an important role in testing HIV which helps physicians to make a proper plan of treatment for the patients and helps to improve the health of the sufferers. Collaboration and advocacy are other roles of nurses in which they assist other healthcare professionals in giving HIV sufferers proper treatment. On the other hand, nurses often advocate different government programmes which help to improve the health of the people and give them a healthy and tension-free life.

7. Conclusion

Nurses play a critical role in providing HIV care facilities to individuals who are suffering from AIDS. They encompass the diagnosis, treatment, education and support that are related to HIV care. Nurses work closely with patients and other healthcare professionals to ensure that the people living with the HIV virus receive the best possible care and have the access to the resources they need to live a healthy and tension-free life. Nurses play a significant role in educating people about HIV and its symptoms which helps to reduce HIV-related implications for the sufferers. Nurses are an important partner among healthcare service

providers that provide critical care to people who are suffering from HIV which is important to end the epidemic. Contribution to nursing facilities and development in the training of nurses will help to reduce the HIV infection rate in the community and it will also provide good quality healthcare services to the individuals who are already suffering from HIV.

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