

Voluntary Counseling and Testing (VCT) for HIV



Over view of VCT

- Voluntary counseling & testing is an HIV prevention intervention initiated by the client at his or her free will.
- VCT provides the opportunity for the client to confidentially explore or understand his/her HIV infection status with the support of a counselor .

VCT : Historical background

- 1984-1985 : HIV test method developed using ELISA system.
- 1985 : public HIV testing started in USA.
- 1990: VCT service initiated in Uganda using ELISA.
- Mid 1990: Rapid test evaluation carried out in Uganda.
- 1997 : same day result VCT.

In 2014, the Saudi Government launched a national voluntary counselling and testing program (VCT) in order to increase awareness about the disease and prevent new cases.





Role of this VCT in PHC

- Unfortunately PHC centres don't working effectively due to:
 1. Health provider is not convinced of VCT importance.
 2. Social media not serve this issue by adding any announcement.
 3. Role of school health in raising awareness of sexual transmitted disease .

Study ID	Country	Population	Number	Study tool	
Haroun et al. 2016	UAE	University Students	2294	Knowledge and attitudes questionnaire	The study participants achieved an overall average knowledge score of HIV/AIDS of 61%. Non-Emirati and postgraduates exhibited higher knowledge levels than Emirati and undergraduate students. About 85% of the students expressed negative attitudes towards people living with HIV, with Emirati expressing more negative attitudes than non-Emiratis.
Badahdah and Sayem 2010	Yemen	University Students	501	Knowledge and attitudes questionnaire	The students had multiple misconceptions about HIV/AIDS and expressed negative attitudes toward those were living with HIV/ AIDS. Females had better attitudes, although they had lower knowledge than males.
Badahdah 2010	Saudi Arabia	Male university students	162	Knowledge and attitudes questionnaire	The degree of knowledge was inversely associated with attitudes towards those living with HIV. However, no significant correlation was observed between religiosity or worry about HIV infection and AIDS stigma.

Omer et al. 2014	Saudi Arabia	Male and female AIDS patients	18	Narrative interviews	HIV-infected patients only told their physicians and spouses about their diagnoses. All participants felt stigmatization, discrimination, and shame. They used spiritual coping strategies to deal with the fears of punishment from God, fear of the disease and death, and lack of psychosocial support.
Badahdah et al. 2009	Yemen	University students	318	AIDS Stigma scale	The study aimed to develop and implement a 10-item Arabic AIDS Stigma Scale.
Ganczak et al. 2007	UAE	University students	267	Knowledge and attitudes questionnaire	The authors reported significant knowledge gaps and negative attitudes towards people living with HIV.
Badahdah and Foote 2010	Kuwait, Bahrain, and Jordan	Female University students	227	Knowledge and attitudes questionnaire	Only in Bahrain was knowledge about HIV and AIDS inversely related to negative attitudes toward people with HIV/AIDS. AIDS-related shame was a strong predictor of AIDS stigma in all three countries.
Soffer 2019	Israel	Israeli Arabs and Jews	183	Knowledge and attitudes questionnaire	Compared to Jews, Arabs had more misinformation about HIV transmission. Arabs scored higher on the Summary Index of Stigma than did Jews.

Mutchler et al. 2018	Lebanon	Beirut gay community	10 different young gay men in at least 3 unique settings	A qualitative examination of the internal dynamics within the Beirut gay community	Lebanese gay individuals stated the need for safe socialization areas and locating and connecting with other young gay men. The study also confirms the presence of external threats to the gay community as stigma, cultural norms, and criminalization of refugees.
Kaplan et al. 2016	Lebanon	Women with HIV/AIDS	10	Narrative interviews	For Lebanese HIV-infected women, AIDS meaning is affected by contextual factors as economics, religion, culture, collectivism, and gender norms. To create new meaning, they learn to navigate the HIV-associated challenges and view their lives as “normal.”
Badahdah and Pedersen 2011	Egypt	HIV-positive women	27	Narrative interviews	The sampled women identified five themes: fear of stigma, social support, financial constraints, characteristics of ART, and reliance on faith. Most patients in this study were highly motivated to achieve perfect adherence.

Why is VCT So Important?

- Most of those infected in many countries do not know that they are infected.
- Knowing one's serostatus allows people to alter their behavior.
- VCT provides an opportunity for prevention counseling and referral to care and support services.
- VCT is an entry point and not the end point.

Why is VCT So Important?

- Effective prevention and care activities require people to know their HIV status.
- VCT promotes and sustains behavior change (prevention).
- VCT facilitates early referral to care and support services- including access to antiretroviral therapy.
- VCT assists in stigma reduction.

Review of VCT Outcomes

- Prevention of HIV transmission
- Prevention of HIV transmission in special populations
- Care: Improving access to medical, emotional, and social support

Conclusion

- Studies from the MENA region highlight poor knowledge and negative attitudes towards people living with HIV/AIDS.
- AIDS patients reported fear and stigma at different levels.
- Educational interventions are warranted to raise knowledge and change attitudes in the media, schools, and healthcare professionals' communications.
- Everyone should be involved, from political organizations, religious organizations, and society members.
- More studies are needed to assess the prevalence and impact of AIDS-related interventions on the society levels.