

# Awareness of human immunodeficiency virus disease among the local community in Ipoh, Perak

Muhammad Nabil, Nur Sara Elyssa, Anis Fahima, Fatin Afifah, Anati Dahlia, Sheikh M Arieq Huwaidi, Lee SL

<sup>1</sup>Surgical Based Department, Royal College of Medicine, Perak, Universiti of Kuala Lumpur, <sup>2</sup>Pre-clinical Department, Royal College of Medicine, Perak. Universiti of Kuala Lumpur, <sup>3</sup>Pathology Department, Quest International University, <sup>4</sup>Yangon General Hospital, Yangon, Myanmar

## ABSTRACT

**Introduction:** One of the biggest threats to global public health is the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS). Although there are fewer new HIV cases in Malaysia, there is still much work to be done to reach zero new infections. Society must have adequate knowledge regarding HIV to prevent infection, improve control and outcome of the disease. **Objective:** Assess the level of knowledge of HIV disease among the local community in Ipoh and the association between sociodemographic factors (gender, age, ethnicity, highest education level). **Materials and Method:** This cross-sectional study was conducted at Padang Polo and Taman D.R. Seenivasagam in April 2024. Convenience sampling was used. Three-hundred-and-eighty-four responses were collected using a self-administered questionnaire. The questionnaire was available in English and Malay with two components - sociodemographic characteristics and the HIV Knowledge Questionnaire-18, a validated instrument for assessing HIV knowledge. Statistical Package for Social Science was used to analyze the data. Descriptive statistics were performed, and chi-square test was used to identify the association between sociodemographic factors and level of knowledge of HIV disease. A p value of  $<0.05$  is statistically significant. **Results:** Males (49.5%) and females (50.5%) were equally represented. The majority were Malay (90.9%) and had received tertiary education (86.2%). Gender and level of knowledge of HIV was statistically significant ( $p=0.015$ ), with males (26.6%) having better knowledge than females (20.8%). There was also a statistically significant association ( $p=0.010$ ) between ethnicity and the level of knowledge of HIV but due to insufficient representation from other ethnic groups, the result from this survey cannot be applied to the general Ipoh community. No association was found between education level and age and the level of knowledge of HIV ( $p=0.163$ ,  $p=0.740$  respectively). Knowledge gaps identified in this study were mostly concerning the modes of transmission of HIV. **Conclusion:** On-going efforts to close the knowledge gaps found in this study are necessary to increase HIV literacy, particularly among the vulnerable population.