

Young People's Knowledge, Attitudes, Practices and Educational Needs Toward Syphilis: A Cross-Sectional Study

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Introduction:

Syphilis, a sexually transmitted infection (STI), remains a significant global public health concern, particularly among young people. If left untreated, syphilis can lead to severe complications.

Methods:

The aim of this cross-sectional study was to assess the knowledge, attitudes, practices, and educational needs regarding syphilis among undergraduate university students aged 19-24 years in Oman. The study employed a convenience sampling approach, and participants were invited to complete a validated self-administered questionnaire online, facilitated by the deanship of admissions and registration.

Results:

Of the 515 surveyed students, 49.3% were girls and 50.7% were boys. Only 239 (46.4%) had heard about syphilis with the majority obtaining their information from the Internet, friends, and social media. However, the participants' overall knowledge about syphilis, including symptoms, transmission and prevention, was found to be unsatisfactory, with a mean total score of 7.35 out of 16 (SD = 3.68). Factors such as a higher academic year and being in a health science speciality were significantly associated with increased awareness of syphilis ($p < 0.001$). Moreover, the participants demonstrated negative attitudes and poor levels of practice toward syphilis, with 442 (85.9%) participants had not undergone syphilis screening. The study found significant positive linear correlations between knowledge-practice ($r = 0.295$, $p < 0.001$), knowledge-attitude ($r = 0.301$, $p < 0.001$), and attitude-practice ($r = 0.410$, $p < 0.001$) regarding syphilis.

Conclusion:

This study highlights inadequate knowledge and poor practices regarding syphilis among undergraduate university students in Oman. Improving knowledge about syphilis can lead to better practices and attitudes toward the disease. This emphasizes the necessity of developing a syphilis education policy, implementing school-based education programs, and conducting health education campaigns to enhance syphilis awareness among young people in Oman and other Asian countries facing similar challenges.

Disclosure of Interest Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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Human subjects approval statement

Ethical approval was obtained from the Deanship of Postgraduate Studies and Research and the Ethical Committee of the College of Nursing at Sultan Qaboos University (SQU).