

Understanding the HIV/AIDS Epidemic and Factors for Turning the Tide to Zero discrimination

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Background:

In 1984, the first AIDS case was reported in Thailand, since then the epidemic has been spreading throughout the country. The HIV epidemic is different among regions in Thailand. The Northern was the first region that suffered from HIV epidemic about 25 years followed by North-Eastern about 20 years and then the Southern about 15 years. This study aimed to determine whether the discrimination on HIV/AIDS was related to the duration of HIV epidemic in the region and to understand possible factors that might affect the acceptance of community on PLWHA.

Method:

A cross-sectional study was conducted among 9 public hospitals in 3 provinces of 3 regions: the Northern, the North-eastern and the Southern. Qualitative data were collected using focus group discussion among 93 health personnel and one HIV coordinator and interview. The interviewees included 9 hospital managers, 4 non-utilized PLWHA and 9 HIV coordinators. (115 respondents)

Results:

The study found that the region that suffered with longer period of HIV/AIDS epidemic had lower stigma and discrimination on PLWHA. The stigma and discrimination depend on HIV Epidemic in region and HIV period in community because longer period of HIV/AIDS epidemic (Northern) established more understanding and the acceptance to PLWHA than those with shorter period (Southern) that had less understanding and acceptance to PLWHA. The possible factors that might affect the acceptance of community on PLWHA were knowledge and attitude toward HIV/AIDS in the community, the positive concepts of consideration and the commitment of PLWHA on community volunteerism as well as PLWHA social activities and occupation status.

HIV epidemic, HIV period in community, stigma and discrimination in regions of Thailand

Topics	Regions in Thailand		
	Northern	North-Eastern	Southern
HIV Epidemic in region	+++	++	+
HIV period in community	+++	++	+
Stigma	+	++	+++
Coping of stigma	+++	++	+
Discrimination	+	++	+++

Notes: symbols in table
+++ High
++ Medium
+ Low

Conclusions:

The community with shorter experience suffered the social distress because of wrong belief and attitude toward HIV/AIDS. To turn the tide towards zero discrimination, knowledge and good attitude on HIV/AIDS in the community, the positive concepts of community consideration and the commitment of PLWHA on community volunteerism are successive factors. The community has to cope with problems on HIV/AIDS epidemic and understand well about difficulties facing by PLWHA to achieve zero discrimination.

Key Words: HIV/AIDS, Epidemic, Turning the tide, Discrimination, Stigma