Knowledge, Attitudes and Behaviors of Medical School Students about HPV, HPV Vaccine and Cervical Cancer

Ekin Vardar[1] , Ayşe Filiz Gökmen Karasu[2]

[1] Bezmialem Vakıf University, Faculty of Medicine, Istanbul, Turkey.
[2] Bezmialem Vakıf University, Faculty of Medicine, Department of Gynecology and Obstetricts, Istanbul, Turkey.

INTRODUCTION

HPV (Human papilloma virus) causes genital warts and cancers of the cervix, vulva, vagina, penis, oropharynx and anal canal. It is a DNA virus that ranks first among sexually transmitted diseases. Types 6, 11 cause genital warts and types 16, 18 cause cervical and anogenital cancer. HPV is the main reason of cervical cancer. Cervical cancer can be detected in the early stages and the patient's life can be saved by taking preventive measures. One of the most important ways to prevent HPV is vaccination. There are three types of HPV vaccine: Bivalent vaccine [for HPV types 16,18], Quadrivalent vaccine [for HPV types 6,11,16,18] and Nonavalent vaccine [for HPV types 6,11,16,18,31,33,45,52,58]. Doctors play a leading role in prevention. They are expected to have reached this awareness during their training and to have started to undertake preventive medicine duties. In our country, the curriculum and scope of this subject in medical education is not clear. In our study, we aimed to determine which factors are related to the level of knowledge of medical students on these issues and what can be changed in this regard.

METHODS

Our cross-sectional and descriptive study was conducted between June and October 2023 among students of Bezmialem Vakif University Faculty of Medicine. A two-stage online survey consisting of sociodemographic questions and HPV Knowledge Scale was administered to 78 participants (n=78).

RESULTS

Of the participants, 64.1% were female (n=50), 35.9% were male (n=28), 14.1% (n=11) were first grade students, 15.4% (n=12) were 2nd, 3rd and 4th grade students, and 70.5% (n=55) were 5th and 6th grade students. The average score of the students from the knowledge scale, which totaled 33 points, was found 24.26. The lowest score was 5 and the highest score was 31. It was observed that the total scores of 1st grade students were significantly lower than those of 5th and 6th grade students and 2nd, 3rd and 4th grade students ($p<0.001$). In terms of the region where the participants spent the longest part of their lives, it was observed that the total scores of those whose answer was Marmara region were significantly higher compared to other regions ($p=0.011$). It was determined that there was no difference between the scale scores of the participants in terms of mother and father education level, marital status, gender, sexual intercourse experience and age at first sexual intercourse ($p>0.05$). In the study, it was found that there was a significant difference between the class and age of the students and their HPV Knowledge Scale scores ($p<0.05$). When the items with the highest rate of incorrect answers in the HPV knowledge scale were analyzed; "HPV usually does not require any treatment." , "When you have an HPV test, you can get your results on the same day." "HPV vaccine is licensed for women between the ages of 30-45." and "Both existing HPV vaccines (Gardasil and Cervarix) provide protection against both genital warts and cervical cancer." were answered incorrectly by more than 61% of the participants.

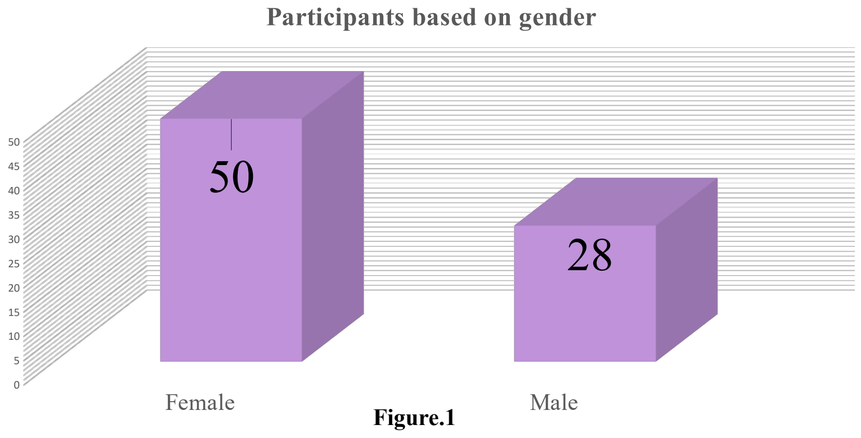

Figure.1

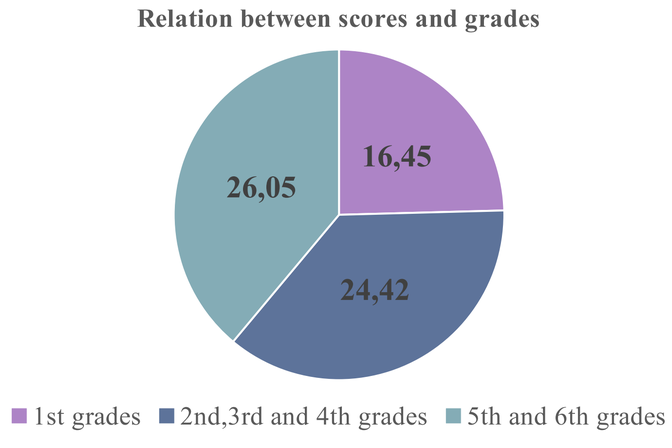

Figure.2

Figure.3

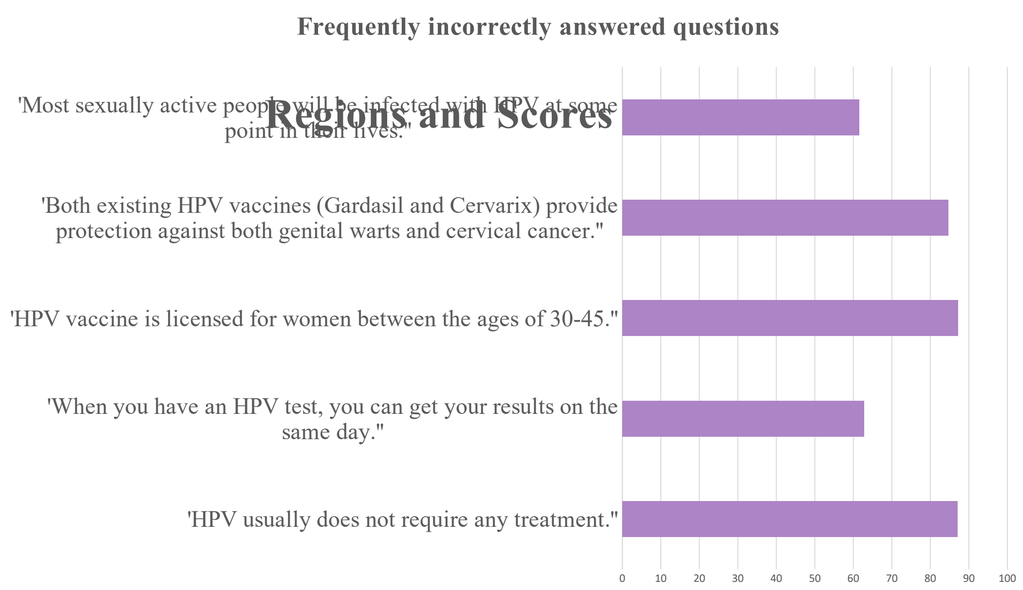

Figure.4

CONCLUSION

Since it was observed that the knowledge level of the students who had just started medical school was lower than that of the students in the upper grades, it was concluded that medical education contributed. Looking at the questions that were frequently answered incorrectly, it was seen that students lacked knowledge about HPV treatment, which vaccine has what effect, screening tests and the relationship between vaccination and age, but when the average score was analyzed, it was determined that the knowledge level of the students was sufficient. It is extremely important for a healthier generation to provide adequate education on HPV and HPV vaccine to medical students who will be the pioneers of the health sector of the future, who will educate the society about health and shape health policies, and to ensure that they graduate with full knowledge through multidimensional education programs.

REFERENCES

1. Duzova M. , Küçükkınalı S. , Emamvırdı A. , Kozak A. T. , Genç H. İ. , Cırık H. A. , Şahinkaya Ş. B. , Ulucan A. M. Knowledge, Attitudes and Behaviors of Medical School Students About HPV, HPV Vaccine and Cervical Cancer: A Survey Study in a Medical School. Genel Tıp Dergisi. 2022; 32(6): 724-729.
2. Human papillomavirus vaccines: WHO position paper, December 2022. Weekly Epidemiological Record No 50, 2022, 97, 645–672. English, French. https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/365350/WER9750-eng-fre.pdf?sequence=1
3. HPV vaccination: What everyone should know | CDC. (n.d.). https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd/hpv/public/index.html#:~:text=Three%20HPV%20vaccines%E2%80%949%2Dvalent,and%20Drug%20Administration%20(FDA).
4. Turhan Çakır A ve ark. Üniversite öğrencilerinin HPV, HPV tarama testi ve HPV aşısına ilişkin bilgi düzeylerinin değerlendirilmesi: Kesitsel bir çalışma. Med J West Black Sea. 2021;5(3):472-480.

KEY WORDS

HPV vaccines, human papillomavirus, knowledge level, medical students