

HIV discussion statements

Introduction

These statements are a good way of starting a study of AIDS. They have proved very effective in stimulating interest and discussion. Their use may lead on to a more open discussion and information sharing session in some groups.

A Suggested Teaching approach

Give out the set of statements and tell students to quickly decide on their answers individually, only about 5 minutes for this. Then ask them to discuss the statements in pairs and come up with agreed answers. This will take about 15 - 20 minutes if they really discuss ideas. If time is short you could get some groups to start at statement 8.

Check answers to statements 1 - 5 by a show of hands on each. Allow time for students to raise issues and uncertainties.

Get feedback from each pair on their answers to the controversial issues 6 - 15 and discuss them with the whole class. This will often take at least half an hour because they will not all agree. It also allows students to raise other questions they may have about AIDS.

The suggested answers to the controversial issues are **one opinion**. You and your class may well come up with **different views**. The comments which go with them provide relevant facts and some ideas for discussion points.

You will probably cover AIDS in more detail in the next lesson so it may not be necessary to make notes at this stage. The exercise is as much about developing discussion skills as about AIDS. However it could be followed up for homework with a short written piece giving their opinion on one of the issues.

References

Textbook
Chapter 2

Specification
9.1 Infectious diseases

12.5 Decisions *g, i*
13.9 Germ theory of disease

Method

Use small group discussion because

- Students enjoy it
- It allows active involvement by everyone
- One loud or quicker thinking student cannot dominate the class
- The shy and less articulate are more able to contribute
- Students learn from each other
- Everyone gets more practice at expressing their ideas
- A two way discussion is almost always more creative than individual thoughts
- Social skills are practiced in a "safe" environment
- It helps individuals clarify arguments for a topic where there are no "right answers"

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Discussing sensitive or controversial issues

Discussion of topics where students may hold strong opposing views, or where there is the possibility of some students being hurt or offended need careful handling.

Teachers may wish to alert students in advance of a lesson if, for example, they are aware of siblings or parent with a genetic disease that may be discussed. Students could be allowed to absent themselves, or leave at any point they choose. When discussing illness where there is a strong emphasis on risk factors within individual control, students of parents with lung cancer or heart disease can be left feeling very bad.

Learning to have these types of discussions with other people is a valuable skill, so should be encouraged. Setting ground rules before the start of the discussion will discourage possible negative outcomes.

One option is for the teacher to provide a list of 'ground rules', and allow students to discuss the reasons for the rules. A list might include the following points:

- Give people time to make their point, do not interrupt
- Do not ridicule other people's opinions, or put them down
- Consider the effect what you are saying may have on other people
- Listen to and consider other people's opinions
- Be aware that body language as well as what you say can affect others

Alternatively, get the students to agree their own list of ground rules.

Post the ground rules on a suitable notice board, and remind students about them from time to time.

Suggested answers to HIV discussion questions

	Agree	Don't know	Disagree	Comments
1			✓	HIV is the virus. The disease is described as AIDS when major symptoms appear
2			✓	Only body fluids, particularly blood and semen
3			✓	The drugs have serious side effects in some people. Patients have to take many pills each day. It is not at all certain that the drugs will go on working throughout a normal lifespan.
4	✓			This is the most widely accepted theory
5			✓	This idea was widely publicised and is plausible but recent research on HIV viral types seems to disprove it.
6			✓	This is not true. In Africa most victims are heterosexual.

7	People with HIV should not be allowed to have children			√	Drugs can be used to minimise the chance of mother to child transfer of the virus. Parental lifespan is the other issue. In Africa there are many AIDS orphans.
8	People infected with HIV should be allowed to keep the fact secret from everyone	√			A balance between the rights of the infected individual and the rights of others to be protected from infection.
9	People infected with HIV should be forced to tell their employers	√			This does depend on the nature of the employment. Those who might infect members of the public who use their services, mainly health workers, should be forced to disclose. As normal contact carries no risk of infection there is no reason for others to do so.
10	If people are infected with HIV it is their own fault as it is the result of promiscuity so they should be forced to pay for their treatment			√	If we start applying this principle it would extend to a very wide range of illnesses including lung cancer, many cases of heart disease etc.
11	HIV drugs are very expensive and can cost the NHS about £3000 per year per person. This expense is not justified when they will die eventually anyway			√	This is no more expensive than many other treatments and can allow the patient to go on contributing to society, by working and paying taxes, caring for children etc.
12	People who have HIV as a result of blood transfusion should have the right to a large compensation from the NHS	√			There is some evidence that the NHS could have acted sooner to prevent many of these infections.
13	Everyone who is in a high risk group should be tested for HIV and told the result, whatever the effects on their life			√	It is more important to get everyone to take responsibility for their own health and to practice safe sex, rather than relying on knowing the HIV status of their partner.

	Agree	Don't know	Disagree	Comments
14		√		Globally more people die from AIDS than cancer. Prevention of AIDS by safe sex is cheap. Not fair to sufferers of other diseases. Likelihood of success is another factor to consider. A vaccine for AIDS would have enormous economic benefit in Africa where so many young adults die.
15	√			Students will have a good sense of the level of information they are receiving.
16		√		There may be a conflict between the rights of the mother to care for her own child and the rights of the child to receive the best health care.
17			√	Some very good scientists have been working on this for a long time. The virus itself is now better understood so research results may speed up.

HIV discussion statements

Read the following statements and discuss them in a small group. You have to decide whether you agree or disagree with each statement. Some are intentionally controversial, some are factual. To encourage you to make up your mind on controversial issues you are only allowed three “don’t know” in the total. When you have finished you will discuss some of these questions in the whole class.

	Statements	agree	don't know	disagree
1	HIV and AIDS mean the same thing.			
2	The HIV virus can be transmitted by any body contact.			
3	Getting HIV doesn't matter so much now because there are drugs which stop it making you ill.			
4	HIV originated in Africa, probably from contact between humans and monkeys.			
5	HIV was probably transferred from monkeys to humans because monkey cells were used to prepare polio vaccine.			
6	AIDS mainly affects gay men so there should be legal restrictions on homosexual relationships.			
7	People with HIV should not be allowed to have children.			
8	People infected with HIV should be allowed to keep the fact secret from everyone.			
9	People infected with HIV should be forced to tell their employers.			
10	If people are infected with HIV it is their own fault as it is the result of promiscuity so they should be forced to pay for their treatment.			
11	HIV drugs are very expensive and can cost the NHS about £3000 per year per person. This expense is not justified when they will die eventually anyway.			
12	People who have HIV as a result of blood transfusion should have the right to a large compensation from the NHS.			
13	Everyone who is in a high risk group should be tested for HIV and told the result, whatever the effects on their life.			
14	HIV is such an awful disease that we should spend more research money on finding a vaccine/cure, even if it takes money from other diseases such as cancer.			
15	The government is not doing enough to increase awareness of how to prevent the spread of AIDS.			
16	If an HIV positive woman has a baby she should be compelled to have the baby tested for HIV so that it can be treated.			
17	It would be easy to find a cure if they spent enough money.			