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Gender differences in anal intercourse among heterosexual adolescents attending public STI clinic in Singapore

Junice Ng

National University of Singapore, Singapore

Background: To examine the prevalence and determinants of anal sex among heterosexual adolescents attending a public clinic for sexually transmitted infections (STIs). We reviewed correlates of multi-level ecological model and sexual behaviors.

Methods: Between 2008 and 2011, we conducted a cross-sectional survey on 1132 never married adolescents aged between 14 and 19 years who reported having engaged in intercourse, and were attending a STI clinic in Singapore, a multi-ethnic Asian country. Data were collected using a self-administered questionnaire and analyzed using logistic regression. In-depth interviews were conducted to better explain the quantitative findings.

Results: Overall prevalence of anal intercourse was 27%, with significantly more females were engaged in it. For both genders, the strongest predictor of anal intercourse was oral sex. They were also more likely to report lower self-esteem and greater perceived external control. For males only, significant correlates were younger age of sexual debut and last method of contraceptive use. Females who were engaged in anal intercourse were more rebellious, diagnosed with STIs and less confident to withstand peer pressure to engage in sex. In-depth interviews reinforced the coercion that females faced to be involved in anal intercourse. Consistent condom use for anal intercourse was 3.5%.

Conclusion: STI prevention programs for adolescents in Asia should include anal intercourse and its associated risks, tailoring approaches to account for gender differences at individual level. Interventions should empower females in avoiding risky sexual situations and increase males' empathy towards their sexual partner.

Biography

Junice Ng is currently in the third year of a PhD program in Public Health at National University of Singapore. Her research revolves around adolescent sexual health and behavior in Singapore.

junice@nus.edu.sg