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Hospitalized Adolescents Missing Out On Sex Ed

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Abstract

This poster presents a review of literature examining how human sexuality encompasses the sexual knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, values, and behaviors of individuals. Its various dimensions involve the anatomy, physiology, and biochemistry of the sexual response system; identity, orientation, roles, and personality; and thoughts, feelings, and relationships. Sexuality is influenced by ethical, spiritual cultural, and moral concerns (Esses, Small, Rodemann, Hartman, 2019). That being said less than one-half of sexually active adolescents have received counseling regarding contraception and sexually transmitted disease (STD) from their health care provider. We hypothesized that hospitalized adolescents would be interested in receiving reproductive health education and/or STD testing. In addition, we assessed the opinion of female adolescents on initiation of contraception during hospitalization (Guss, Wunsch, McCulloh, Donaldson, Alverson, 2014).

Research/Aims/Questions

- We hypothesize that hospitalized adolescents would be interested and benefit in receiving sex education due to missing out on this experience in the school setting.
- In researching this topic we aim to provide evidence of the importance of sexual education for adolescents who are withdrawn from participating in school and receiving the education provided to their peers.

Table 1.
Indications and Barriers for Sexual Health Education in the Inpatient Pediatric Population

Indications	Barriers
Compromised health and immunity	Provider and parental bias
High susceptibility to STDs	Provider and parental discomfort
Poor medication and treatment side effects	Primary focus on physical disease
Physical and developmental disabilities	Inadequate provider education
Infertility	Lack of guidelines and research
Increased incidence of unsafe sexual activity	Mass media influence (social media/TV/Internet)
Poor sexual identity	
Lack of sexual health education	

Bakke, 2016

“Providers and parents may occasionally be overprotective of these ill children and have a bias that they are not interested in sexual activity” –Bakke 2016



Importance of Sexual Education for Adolescents

In the field of sexual education, adolescents will look to their peers for information if they do not have an outlet of a trusted adult to seek this information from. Looking to peers over formal education on this topic can be detrimental to an adolescent’s development in this area because they are likely not receiving true and factual information. During adolescence, teens age twelve to eighteen are in the stage of Identity versus Role Confusion according to the psychosocial stages of Erik Erikson. It is during this period of development that teens are seeking to form their sense of self and identity. Adolescents who are hospitalized during this phase of development have a need to be provided with the same level of adequate information on this topic as their typically developing peers.

Background and Findings

Background

- Chronically ill pre-teens and adolescents often spend months as inpatients while undergoing treatment (Bakke, 2016).
- This population includes but is not limited to oncology, transplant, physically disabled, and medically fragile pediatric patients (Bakke, 2016).
- Sexual health education is often considered less important than the complex disease states and medical issues faced by pediatric inpatients (Bakke, 2016).

Findings

- Hospitalized adolescents are interested in receiving sexual health services in inpatient setting, regardless of sexual experience or engagement with a primary care provider (Guss, Wunsch, McCulloh, Donaldson, Alverson, 2014).
- 25% of males and 33% of females were interested in receiving STD testing while in the hospital (Guss, et al., 2014).
- 40% of male adolescents and 37% of female adolescents wanted to learn more about contraception or abstinence in the hospital (Guss, et al., 2014).

What would this Sex Ed Program Look Like?

- **Who:** Taught by licensed teachers conducting the hospital education program. This could be overseen by Certified Child Life Specialists to ensure developmental needs of adolescents are taken into consideration.
- **What:** A hybrid version of the sex education program from the adolescents own school system will be utilized in the program. A syllabus and lesson plan will be obtained from the adolescents school to provide the same education background to the adolescent as is being received by their peers receiving this course. Provide educational resources to further aid learning these important topics when not hospitalized.
- **When:** Adolescents that are hospitalized for longer than two to three weeks. This is a substantial period of time and vital information on this subject could be missed due to the hospitalization.
- **Where:** This education can take place in the hospital school or playroom. The education can also be given in the adolescents own hospital room to provide more confidentiality and comfort with these sensitive topics.