Female Teens & Sexual Consent: How conversations on consent affect teens’ sexual behaviors

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Background

Research and prevention education on sexual violence have focused on college-aged females largely ignoring adolescents.1 However, adolescents experience a high rate of assault. Consent education is often the focus for prevention but has primarily been directed to college-aged individuals and sexual violence victims.

Research on female adolescents’ exposure to consent information and its affect on sexual behaviors is needed.

OBJECTIVE:

To assess how adolescents interpret and communicate consent and non-consent for sexual encounters.

Methods

• Convenience sample of patients attending adolescent specific Title X funded or primary care clinic.
• Online, anonymous survey about communication and interpretation of sexual consent.
• We compared young women’s responses using mean tests or chi-squared tests.

Results

101 completed surveys
Exposure to Consent?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>88.1%</td>
<td>10.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N= 89</td>
<td>N=11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mean age 19.04 years (14-24)

Age at 1st sex: 16.08 (yrs) (12-23)
Number of sexual partners in past year 2.10 (1-13)
85.5% sexually active
60% sexually active

Mean age 19.08 years (15-24)

Age at 1st sex: 15 (14-18 yrs)
Number of sexual partners in past year 2.83 (1-4)

How has spoken to you about consent?
Who do you wish would speak to you?

Figure 1: Source of consent information for participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Healthcare</th>
<th>Mom</th>
<th>Dad</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Sister</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2: Preferred source of consent information for participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Healthcare</th>
<th>Mom</th>
<th>Dad</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Sister</th>
<th>School Counsellor</th>
<th>Male Friend</th>
<th>Female Friend</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Behavioral: 20% No consent vs. 9.9% Consent group saw pushing someone away or saying no as a girl being flirty.

Substance use: 30% No consent vs. 17% Consent group believed a girl was responsible for things getting out of hand if she had sex while drunk and/or high

Discussion

• Most (88.1% vs 10.9%) reported someone had talked to them about sexual consent:
  • 61.8% reported their mother
  • 50.6% reported their healthcare provider
  • Few (7.8%) could report what their provider discussed with them
• 69.2% would want a health provider to talk about consent (73.8% Consent vs. 30% No consent, p= 0.015)

References


Acknowledgements

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