

ADOLESCENTS TALKING ABOUT SEX: DOING IT BUT NOT DOING IT SAFELY

Ng CJ, Kamal SF. Bridging the gap between adolescent sexuality and HIV risk: the urban Malaysian perspective. *Singapore Med J.* 2006;47:482-90 [PubMed]

HIV infection is a growing problem globally. Recent Malaysian epidemiological data registered some worrying trends. Firstly, it affected a relatively young age group, between the ages of 20-29 years; and secondly, there was a rising incidence among women. In a research done by Ng CJ and Kamal SF, they explored qualitatively the practice of safe sex, especially use of condoms, among late adolescents in relation to HIV risk. They conducted 16 in-depth interviews among 16 sexually active private college students (ten females, six males) in Klang Valley in 2002.

In this study, although condom was the most popular choice, most did not use it regularly. The authors discovered some locally relevant factors which influence the practise of safe sex:

- Trust: This trusting attitude was based on the perception of their partners and relationships, which in turns influenced their decision on condom use.
- Reliance on partners: Some relied on their partners to practise safe sex, rather than openly discussing with their partners or taking a proactive role.
- Less pleasurable: For the male participants the use of condoms during sexual intercourse was felt to be less pleasurable and troublesome. The female participants were more passive when it comes to using condoms, citing their partners' preference as the main reason for not using it.
- Complacency: Some participants (both males and females) had not put much thought into the possibility of pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Some were complacent because they were not pregnant or infected with HIV despite practising unprotected sex for a long time.
- Risk perception: When asked about their perception of risk of contracting STD/HIV infections, most participants felt that they were not at risk, citing having a stable, "clean" partner as the main reason.

In general practice, consultation with adolescents creates a good opportunity to discuss health issues including safe sex. By understanding their perceptions towards safe sex, we can provide more effective and targeted health education with an aim to prevent STIs and pregnancy.

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GPs PRESCRIBED ANTIBIOTICS SEVEN TIMES MORE THAN DOCTORS IN KLINIK KESIHATAN

Teng CL, Nik Sherina H, Ng CJ, Chia YC, Atiya AS. Antibiotic prescribing for childhood febrile illness by primary care doctors in Malaysia. *J Paediatr Child Health.* 2006;42:612-7 [PubMed]

What did doctors do when they were faced with a febrile child in their clinics? Teng *et al* looked at this issue by interviewing caregivers of 649 febrile children in 13 clinics (one university-based primary care clinic, six public primary care clinic [Klinik Kesihatan], and six private general practice clinics). The doctors' clinic records were examined for antibiotic prescribing. They found that one-third of the children had prior consultation for the same episode of fever. About 80% of the febrile children were diagnosed to have upper respiratory tract infection, viral fever and gastroenteritis. Overall antibiotic prescribing rate was 36.6% (public primary care clinic 26.8%, private general practice clinic 70.0% and university-based primary care clinic 32.2%). Factors independently associated with antibiotic prescription were: clinic setting, longer duration of fever (>7 days), higher temperature (>38°C) and the diagnosis of upper respiratory tract infections. Taking into account the demographic and clinical factors, antibiotic prescription in private general practice clinic was seven times higher than public primary care clinic and 1.6 times higher than university-based primary care clinic. The amount of antibiotics prescribed was much more than what we should be comfortable with. Are doctors in private general practice clinics more responsive to the parental expectation for antibiotics? Do they regard antibiotics as a safety net or are they practising defensive medicine? As we face the increasing problem of antibiotic resistance, we need to re-examine our current management of febrile children in primary care.

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