Contraceptive use and non-use among students

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Introduction

- A third of schools in Britain lack age appropriate sex education
- Teenage pregnancy rates in the UK are falling
- UK has some of the highest rates of teenage pregnancies in Europe
- Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are on the increase

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Aim

To investigate factors relating to contraceptive use and non-use among students at The University of Portsmouth.
Research design

- Online questionnaire with the use of iPads, at the library, club society meetings and students’ union.
  - Demographics
  - Information about sexual activity
  - Sexually transmitted infections (STIs)
  - Number of sexual partners in their lifetime
  - Contraceptive and emergency contraceptive use
- Descriptive statistics to analyse the closed questions
- Content analysis to analyse open questions
Results

- 171 questionnaires were completed
- 74% (n=171) of participants reported having had sex
- 61% were <22 years old
- Significantly more white students p<0.01
- 68% (n=126) reported having more than three sexual partners during their lifetime.
- Emergency contraception use and incidence of STD significantly higher in those reporting more than three partners.

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Results

- Male condom (65%) & contraceptive pill (50%) most common forms of contraception (n=126).
- Contraceptive non-use reported by 66% of participants (n=126)
- Reasons for non-use:
  - Preferred the feel of intercourse without it (57%)
  - Alcohol consumption (40%).
- Contraceptive non-use almost doubled in those reporting more than three sexual partners.
Results

- Sex education was perceived as poor by 36% of all participants.
- 69% were uncomfortable talking to parents about sex and/or contraception.
- 72% talked to friends/used the internet for sex education & contraceptive advice.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field</th>
<th>Had sex</th>
<th>Unprotected sex</th>
<th>&gt;3 partners</th>
<th>Talk with parents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Humanities (n=37)</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>68% (n=34)</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology (n=23)</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>71% (n=17)</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative &amp; cultural industry (n=29)</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>76% (n=21)</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science (n=49)</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>68% (n=34)</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business School (n=32)</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>90% (n=20)</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Conclusion

- Sex education may have been poor for a third of participants in this study.
- OR that they ignore or make different choices than other people would after receiving sex education.
- Many sexual partners poses a greater risk of contraceptive non-use, STDs and potentially unplanned pregnancies.
Conclusion

- Limitations of this study include:
  - Students may not have answered honestly about the number of sexual partners.
  - Students may have misinterpreted the meaning of sexual partners.
  - Participants felt more comfortable talking about sex and contraception with friends.
Conclusion

- Universities should take advantage of sexual health and wellbeing events to offer advice
- Discuss contraceptive use and methods that suit young people’s needs
- Pharmacists and/or pharmacy students could run public health campaigns during Freshers’ or Health and Wellbeing Weeks to promote safe sexual practices

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Conclusion

Such interventions and personalised counselling may lead to increased awareness and use of contraception and lower incidences of risky sexual practices in young people.