

Understanding adolescent sexual activity: An exploration of family communication and condom use among sexually active adolescents

Carrie M. Pettler

Purpose: To study family communication and adolescent condom use among a representative sample of sexually active, heterosexual adolescents.

Methods: General and sex-specific family communication and condom use in Massachusetts Youth Risk Behavioral Surveillance System 2007 data were stratified by gender and evaluated by simple descriptive statistics and multivariate logistic regression for this cross-sectional study.

Results: 72% of students reported that they had not had sex-specific family communication or that it had only occurred once in the past year (45% reported never and 27% reported only once in the past year). Neither general nor sex-specific family communication was associated with condom use (i.e. $p \geq .05$).

Conclusion: Almost three-quarters of adolescents reported that they had not had sex-specific family communication or that it occurred only once in the past year. It appears this could be an opportunity to intervene with anticipatory guidance among parent/teen dyads. Additionally, research is needed to determine why sex-specific communication between teens and family members so rarely or never occurs.

Thesis Committee:

Jane Mitchell Rees, PhD, MS, RD (Chair)

Peggy Hannon, PhD, MPH

Leslie R. Walker, MD



This study was supported by the US Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration's Maternal and Child Health Bureau (Title V, Social Security Act), grant #T76MC00011.