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Journal of Adolescent Health

Volume 35, Issue 4, October 2004, Pages 345.e27-345.e35

Original article

Teens speak out about HIV/AIDS: Focus group discussions about risk and decision-making

This paper was presented at the 67th annual meeting of the Pacific Sociological Association in Seattle, WA, March 1996.

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<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2003.12.002>

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Abstract

Purpose

To better understand the factors teens consider when making decisions regarding sex and condom use.

Methods

Twenty-one same-sex focus groups were conducted with a total of 92 male and female teens from a range of high school programs; schools were selected based on the range of programs and diversity of students enrolled. Focus group moderators facilitated groups using a set of open-ended key questions about sexual decision-making and

HIV/AIDS for each group; discussion on a specific topic area continued until no new information was generated. Group discussions were tape-recorded and transcribed, and themes were identified through independent content analysis of the transcriptions and assistant moderator notes.

Results

Although teens acquire HIV/AIDS knowledge in school and are aware of positive and negative outcomes of engaging in sexual behavior, many times the information does not seem salient or personally relevant and thus is not used in making decisions related to having sex. In general, results indicate that boys and girls seem to have different ideas/reasons for having or not having sex. Boys relate to the physical nature of sex, whereas girls relate to the emotional aspects. Teens report being bored with AIDS education, but suggest needing information that is more relevant for them.

Conclusions

Attempts should be made to make HIV education more relevant for teens so that they use the information they have when making decisions about safer sexual behavior. Different approaches may be needed for boys and girls.



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Keywords

Adolescents; HIV/AIDS education; Focus groups; Teens

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