

Condom Use Among Sexually Active Kenyan Female Adolescents at Risk for HIV-1 Infection

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Abstract High rates of unintended pregnancy and HIV infection occur in sub-Saharan Africa yet few Kenyan studies have defined correlates of condom use in sexually active female adolescents. Female adolescents receiving reproductive health care and aged 15–19 were interviewed. The prevalence of ever-use of condom was 21.4% and 52 (7.3%) subjects were infected with HIV-1. Older age, higher levels of education, ever-use of hormonal contraceptives and higher numbers of sexual partners, non-consensual sex and exchange of sex for favours, were independent correlates of condom use. Condom use should be promoted in this population. Further exploration is needed on the developmental and contextual factors predisposing female adolescents to increased risk of HIV.

Keywords Condom · Female adolescents · Kenya

Introduction

In Kenya, three quarters of all women initiate sexual intercourse during adolescence and by the age of twenty, more than half of women have begun child-bearing, with 18% of the total unplanned or unwanted pregnancy burden occurring among women in this age group (Central Bureau of Statistics 2003). The Kenya Demographic and Health Survey (KDHS) 2003 showed that HIV prevalence countrywide among girls 15–19 years old was 3%, seven times that of boys the same age, with HIV prevalence in urban areas significantly higher than in rural areas (Central Bureau of Statistics 2003). Without adequate protection, sexual activity predisposes female adolescents to unintended pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). Decreasing age at sexual debut, higher number of sexual partners and lack of condom use are some of the factors that have been cited as predictors of prevalent HIV (Cheluget et al. 2006; Hallet et al. 2007). In spite of increased access to contraceptive choices, including condoms, adolescent pregnancy and HIV infection still remain major public health problems in many countries in sub-Saharan Africa, including Kenya. Women are at a very high risk of infection during adolescent years and there is need to better understand their risk factors.

Condoms are instrumental in preventing HIV infection among women of reproductive age and preventing unintended pregnancy among HIV-infected women, two key pillars in the UNAIDS strategic framework on prevention of mother-to-child HIV transmission. Several studies have demonstrated the efficacy of consistent condom use in the

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