Abstract

The rates of pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases among teens in the U.S. seem to be much higher than those in other industrialized countries. Teenagers are more likely to contract STDs since they have less access to prevention methods, as well as in many cases, less knowledge about how to properly protect themselves. Many sex education programs have been implemented in high schools across the country, yet not all of them are equally effective. The purpose of this research is to compare abstinence-based programs to comprehensive programs. Previous studies point out the fact that neither type of program is likely to hasten the initiation of sexual activity and that both of these programs could have some positive effects. Available data from previous studies will be used for a meta-analysis to see which programs are more effective and what the reason for this might be.

Literature Review

The rates of pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases among teens in the U.S. seem to be much higher than those in other industrialized countries. With the U.S. experiencing such high rates, it is necessary to find a way to educate our youth, so that these issues can be prevented or at least reduced. Before being able to examine the effects of sexual education programs on high school students, it is necessary to discuss and examine previous studies that have focused on this topic.

The first study examined, Abstinence, Sex, and STD/HIV Education Programs for Teens: Their Impact on Sexual Behavior, Pregnancy, and Sexually Transmitted Disease (Kirby, 2007), discusses the effects of curriculum-based programs, and it compares those that promote abstinence only to comprehensive programs, which promote the use of condoms, contraceptives and other responsible sexual behavior. Not enough evidence was found to believe that the programs based on abstinence only had any significant effects; however, this might be attributed to the low number of programs that were studied.

On the other hand, the comprehensive programs disproved the belief of many that these types of programs increase sexual behavior or hasten the initiation of it. This is the same result to have been found by the second study, Does Sexuality Education Last? Self-Reported Benefits of a High School Comprehensive Sexuality Education Course (McCaffree & Mattack, 2001), where a comprehensive education program in high school, is believed to have helped students make educated decisions, but not encourage any new sexual behavior. In all of the studies analyzed, these programs were believed to encourage safer sex, and decrease the number of sexual partners. The studies did not seem to delay the initiation of sex.

Some clear evidence of these effects can be seen through programs like Safer Choices, this program was applied in ten high schools is Texas and California, after a 31 month follow up, the program resulted in the improvement of knowledge about STDs and HIV and was able to strengthen students’ ability to use condoms and have safer sexual behaviors. Even though all of these studies provide an idea of how sexual education programs can have an effect on students, I would like to compare how the results of an abstinence only curriculum, such as the one Texas bases their sexual education on, compares to the results given by a comprehensive sexual education program that is currently being incorporated in other schools across the country.

Methodology

I will be using meta-analysis as the methodology to my research. I will be selecting different studies that analyze the effects of comprehensive programs and abstinence-based ones individually, as well as studies that include both types of programs. The point of using this methodology would be to find the true effect size of these programs by combining and analyzing data obtained from different samples and under different conditions. The studies will need to have certain characteristics to be used in the research, and it will also be necessary to avoid a false result by making sure there is no publication bias.

References


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The good news: promising new treatments.
The bad news: half of our kids will need them.