

ADOLESCENT SEXUAL HEALTH IN KISII COUNTY: KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDES AND PRACTICES.

(Muendo C, Herzog T, Naulikha J, Batra M, Pak-Gorstein S, Nduati R)

University of Nairobi-Nairobi, University of Washington-Seattle

BACKGROUND

While public health have made gains in global mortality for children under 5 years of age, adolescent health remains underserved in many areas of the world. Approximately 198 million young adults aged 15-24 years live in Sub-Saharan Africa and adolescents comprises of 24% of the Kenyan population. They are particularly vulnerable to sexual health issues including early and unintended pregnancy, unsafe abortion, female genital mutilation, child marriages, sexual violence, and sexual transmitted infections including HIV. Given the significant impact that sexual health plays in health, we sought to understand adolescent sexual health and behaviors in Kisii.

METHODS

This was a descriptive survey using a mixed methodology approach conducted in Kisii county from May to July 2016. We collected data using hospital registers, we interviewed 20 households, conducted questionnaires and focus groups with 218 and 210 primary (class 7 and 8) and secondary (form 1 to 4) students respectively. We conducted key informant interviews with 11 school administrators and focus groups with 47 teachers. The qualitative data was analysed by identifying major themes while the quantitative data was analysed using Microsoft excel.

RESULTS

Adolescents accounted for 12% of the deliveries at Kisii Referral Hospital from 2014-2015 yet, they accounted for only 4% of antenatal clinic and 3% of family planning clinic patients. Caregivers felt schools (65%) and church (60%) are the best places for children to be taught about reproductive health. Sexual debut was reported by 36% of girls and 23% of boys in a rural primary school and in 49% of girls and 67% of boys in a mixed secondary school.

CONCLUSIONS

Adolescents are underutilizing preventative reproductive health services relative to their burden of pregnancy and delivery. A concerted effort to improve life skills and reproductive health education at all levels of the community may provide greater impact on the lives of adolescents.