Focus on Sexual Health

The National College Health Assessment was administered in the 2009 Spring semester to a random sample of undergraduate students at Villanova. This survey included questions about students’ sexual behavior. Specifically, students were asked “within the last 30 days, did you have oral sex, vaginal intercourse, anal intercourse?”

As shown in Figure 1, one in three students never had vaginal intercourse and fewer, one in four, never had oral sex. A substantially higher number of students never engaged in anal intercourse, although the rates for men and women differed significantly.

In the 30 days prior to the students completing the survey, 43% of women and men reported having oral sex or vaginal intercourse.

Of those who engaged in sexual activity, the use of protection differed widely. See Figure 2.

- About one in five women and one in four of the men said they never or rarely used a condom or barrier during vaginal intercourse.
- 52% of the women and 45% of the men always used protection. (The remaining used protection some or most of the time.)
- Conversely, students who engaged in oral sex never used a condom or barrier (93% of women and 95% of the men).
- Only 4% of men and women said they always used protection during oral sex.

Within the last 12 months, 12% of the women who drank and 14% of the men who drank had unprotected sex as a consequence of their drinking.

The number of partners over a 12-month period is shown in Figure 3 below. Consistent with the other questions, one in three did not have sexual intercourse. Women tended to have fewer sexual partners than the men. Nearly half of the women (45%) had only one sexual partner during this time period; whereas 36% of the men had only one partner. Five percent of the women and nearly double the percentage of men had 5 or more partners in the last 12 months.
The Research Is Clear:

• Unplanned sexual activity is significantly correlated as a consequence of alcohol use (Klein, Geaghan & MacDonald, 2007; www.acha-ncha.org).

• Data from the National Youth Risk Behavior Survey and Monitoring the Future indicate that high school students who binge drink demonstrate higher risk for a number of other high-risk behaviors, including unprotected sexual activity (Miller, Naimi, Brewer & Jones, 2007).

• The “hookup” culture demonstrates significant correlations with sexual health for college students today, including Catholic colleges and universities (Paul, McManus & Hayes, 2000; Korpita, Mohn, & Hill, 1993).

One-Minute Strategies:

• Don’t cancel that class—invite a Health Promotion staff member, Student Health Center staff member or the POWER peer educators to address the issues of sexual health and healthy relationships.

• Be cognizant of generalizing the sexual behaviors of Villanova students. Contrary to popular belief, abstinence rates among Villanova students continue to increase (Villanova University, American College Health Association—National College Health Assessment, 2006–2009).

• Encourage and generate discussion around the “hookup culture,” its definition, implications and associated risks.

Short-Term Commitment Strategies:

• Incorporate extra credit opportunities for students who attend and complete a reflection paper about an on-campus sexual health program. POWER peer educators provide campus-wide sexual health programs during the months of February and November. Any Health Promotion staff member can provide specific dates, times and locations. Call 610.519.7407 for more information.

• Create or replicate sexual health/risky behavior assessment forms for students to complete. This form can demonstrate how poor personal choices affect academics. The Office of Health Promotion can provide you with these forms or questions used on the American College Health Association’s National College Health Assessment (www.acha-ncha.org).

Long-Term Commitment Strategies:

• Keep abreast of the language and various media outlets students use when discussing sexual health (i.e., Facebook group entitled “Overheard at Villanova”). This allows you to stay current with the trends and enhances discussion and credibility with students.

• Become familiar with on-campus student resources that provide education and counseling around sexual health and healthy relationships. Include these resources along with other resources that affect academics, such as stress and time management, in your course syllabi or departmental resources.

• Incorporate sexual health in your class discussion. For example, utilize the college trends and statistics to correlate long-term societal impacts, such as the rise in healthcare costs, family structures, global impacts, resistance to medication, etc.

Resources:

www.villanova.edu/studentlife/healthcenter, 610.519.4070 (Student Health Center, for confidential & low-cost sexually transmitted infection, pregnancy & predatory drug testing & treatment)

www.acha-ncha.org (American College Health Association, National College Health Assessment Reference Group Data, 2002-2009)

www.cdc.gov/STD (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2009)

www.siecus.org (Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States)

Hooking Up: Sex, Dating, and Relationships on Campus (K. Bogle, 2008)

Bibliography:


