

Assessing Prevalence of Sexual Activity and Contraceptive Practices through Intake Screening of Adolescent Inpatients

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Background:

- Utilization of barrier protection is a critical component of safe sex practices for contraception as well as sexually transmitted infection prevention.
- Adolescent sexual health is usually assessed and addressed in outpatient settings.
- Prevalence of adolescent sexual activity and barrier use documented on admission screens has not been previously reported.

Methods:

- Retrospective cohort study of sexual activity admission screens in adolescents 10 years of age or older admitted to a quaternary care academic children's hospital from January 2018 to December 2020.
- Age, gender, sexual activity and contraception use were collected from the electronic health record.
- Statistical analyses were by two-tailed t-testing and Chi-square testing.

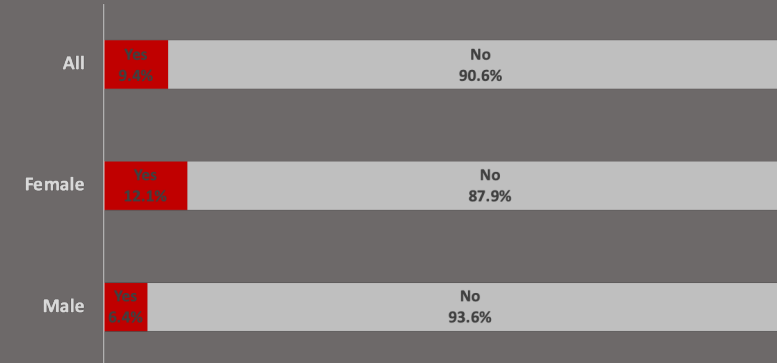
Results:

- Screening was documented at 2802 adolescent hospital encounters, involving 1966 patients (956 male, 1010 female). Sexual activity screening was positive in 263 (9.4%) encounters (6.4% of males, 12.1% of females; $p < 0.05$).
- Average age of males and females reporting sexual activity was 16.6 years; significantly higher than those not reporting sexual activity (14.0 years; $p < 0.05$).
- Routine use of any method of protection was reported by 84.2% of respondents (87.1% of males, 82.8% of females; $p > 0.05$). This included barrier protection in 54.7% (85.5% of males, 39.8% of females; $p < 0.05$).

Discussion:

- The higher rate of sexual activity reported by females differs from rates reported in outpatient settings, possibly reflecting differences in our sample population or in how reporting may differ based on setting. Larger studies in inpatient settings may inform our understanding of adolescent sexual practices.
- Hospitalized adolescents reported using barrier protection inconsistently, leaving them at risk of contracting sexually transmitted infections. The inpatient setting offers an opportunity for educational interventions regarding adolescent sexual health.

In this population, females were more likely than males to report sexual activity.



Most adolescents reported routine use of contraception, with males more likely than females to report use of barrier protection.

