

Adolescent Girls and Topical Microbicides: Attitudes of Health Care Providers

SL Rosenthal, L Mills, MB Short,
JM Majkowski, LR Stanberry



Adolescent Girls and Sexuality

- ◆ A process of development and growth
- ◆ For girls in US societal messages include:
 - Focus on coital behaviors to the exclusion of non-coital behaviors
 - Control rather than expression
 - Associated primarily w/ negative outcomes
- ◆ Sexually experienced girls at risk for STDs

Chlamydia: Age- and gender-specific rates: United States, 2000

Men

Rate (per 100,000 population)

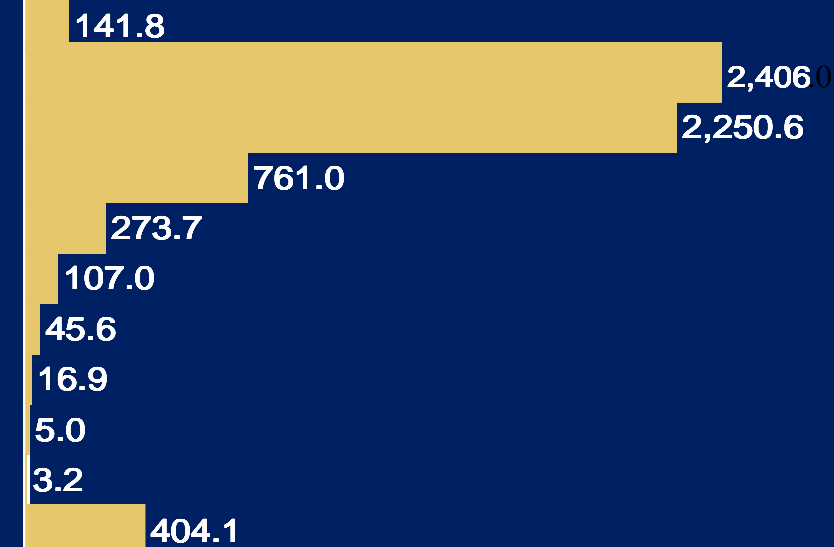
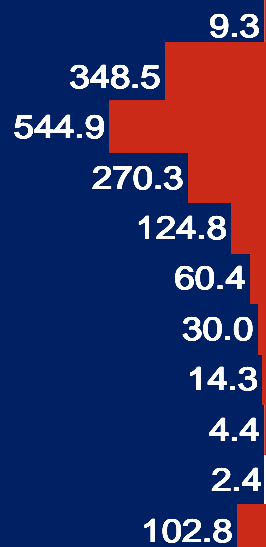
Women

2,500 2,000 1,500 1,000 500 0

Age

0 500 1,000 1,500 2,000 2,500

Age	Gender Total
10-14	73.9
15-19	1,348.5
20-24	1,381.7
25-29	516.9
30-34	200.0
35-39	83.8
40-44	37.9
45-54	15.6
55-64	4.7
65+	2.9
Total	256.9



Sources of Advice

- ◆ Adolescents rely on “experts” who will need to be well informed
- ◆ Who will be the expert?
 - Health care professionals
 - Parents
 - Peers
 - Media

One Expert: Health Care Providers

- ◆ Purpose:

To describe those issues which health care providers believe would promote or discourage use of topical microbicides among adolescents

Methods

- ◆ Recruited from North American Society of Adolescent and Pediatric Gynecologists (NASPAG) annual meeting
- ◆ 3 focus groups (5-7 per group)
- ◆ 21 health care providers

Participants

- ◆ Topical microbicide knowledge was variable
- ◆ Subspecialties:
 - 8 Pediatricians/Adolescent Medicine
 - 7 Obstetricians/Gynecologists
 - 5 Nurse Practitioners/RN
 - 1 Psychologist
- ◆ Gender: 18 females; 3 males

Methods

- ◆ Open-ended questions
- ◆ Focus groups were videotaped and transcribed
- ◆ Each transcript was coded independently; disagreements were resolved through consensus

Topics

- ◆ Developmental issues
- ◆ Use of and access to microbicides
- ◆ Biological concerns
- ◆ Condom migration
- ◆ Adolescent packaging

Developmental Issues

- ◆ Age and experience will influence use and acceptance

“I think older adolescents are more likely to have the maturity to be comfortable putting something in their own vagina.”

“I think obviously in the younger teens, the question [is], do they understand the ramifications of their actions?... We can't get them to use condoms; it would have the same issues using this method.”

- ◆ Lack of perceived susceptibility

Developmental Issues

◆ Poor planning

“It’s not that planned – kids that are at most risk have very disruptive lives. They have intercourse after school. They have intercourse at odd times. It’s just not – it’s a great thought but it’s really an adult thought. It’s not – except for a very exceptional adolescent – and that adolescent perhaps may not be at much risk because they’re practicing other kinds of safety.”

“Something as effective after intercourse would be applied afterwards because they won’t plan ahead. But they might get scared afterwards and use that.”

Use and Access

- ◆ Use regularly not connected to coitus

“Something that’s as infrequent as feasible – something they use say once a week instead of with every act of intercourse would be much more desirable.”

- ◆ Post-coital use could be tied to douching; concerns were raised about the promotion of douching

“ I think the young women in our population that are going to douche are douching.”

“I think the douching idea is not one of my recommendations.”

Use and Access

- ◆ When asked about “stealth,”
 - Endorsed the concept
 - But most focused more on privacy and the advantage of not having to communicate

Use and Access

- ◆ Should be both over the counter and covered by Medicaid

Biological Concerns

- ◆ Needs to be safe for oral and rectal use
- ◆ Needs to not be harmful to the normal vaginal flora or mucosal surface

“Maybe it won’t be as long-term health risky, but if you use a vaginal tablet to prevent gonorrhoea and then got this raging vaginitis be it irritative or be it yeast or something, would you use it again?”

Condom Migration

- ◆ Should be as efficacious as condoms
 - If not, all concerned about condom migration
 - If not, may not take the time to counsel about microbicides

Adolescent Packaging

- ◆ Adolescent-friendly
- ◆ Multi-dose packages with individual dosing
- ◆ Small size and durable

“Might need to put them in their blue jeans, so they can’t be something that will rupture if you sit down.”

- ◆ Looks like something else

“Like a Chapstick.”

Implications

- ◆ Health care providers are a key expert for adolescents
- ◆ These health care providers were skeptical
- ◆ The following issues will need to be addressed to have their support:
 - Knowledge regarding topical microbicides
 - Evidence of continued efforts to address developmental barriers
 - Safety for the normal vaginal environment
 - Effectiveness of the product relative to condoms

Future Research

- ◆ More information is needed about:
 - Adolescents' anticipated preference
 - Mothers' anticipated preference for daughters
 - Role of the media