Adolescent Perceptions of Sexual Health Education Transmitted Via Social Media
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Purpose: To critique a Facebook intervention and to explore how best to present engaging, interactive, appealing and meaningful sexual health content to adolescents and young adults.

Background

Rates & Facebook Intervention
• Sexually transmitted disease (STD) in US
  - 19 million cases reported annually
  - 50% attributed to persons aged 15-24

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disease</th>
<th>Peoria Cases</th>
<th>Peoria Rate (100,000)</th>
<th>State Rate</th>
<th>National Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chlamydia</td>
<td>1094</td>
<td>72.5</td>
<td>354.4</td>
<td>426</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gonorrhea</td>
<td>542</td>
<td>425.2</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

• Condom use during sex increased 23%
• 81% felt website influenced their decision to use sexual protection & 74% were encouraged to reduce the # of their sexual partners.
• 54% reduction in positive Chlamydia cases among 15-17 year olds in Champaign County.

CSTDC Collaborative
Community STD Collaborative comprised of students, health care and social service agencies, the county health department, faith-based organizations and personnel from UIC College of Medicine, Nursing and Library Sciences guided this study.

Methods/Sample
• 8 focus groups (2 urban HS, 1 suburban HS, 1 rural HS, 4 at a Midwestern University)
• 63 participants (56% female, 44% male)
• Age: 32% 15-17, 23% 18, 45% 19-23
• 48% HS, 52% College
• CSTDC students served as peer moderators
• 100% Facebook account/72% smartphone
• Facebook: 1-2 x day (36%), 3-4 x (23%), 5+ (41%)
• Access: 91% Home, 48% School, 6% work

Results

Privacy Protection
• "A lot of people already look this stuff up. No big deal", "Of all the groups we join this is mild."
• "No concerns, I would share it with all of my friends."
• "Yeah, the information will spread faster than an STD on campus."

Barriers: Seek SH Info
• "I can’t talk to my parents, feel they judge me.” "Mine think we learn all this in school.”
• "Lack of sites that talk to teens-Ones that do, talk down to us. I find sites I don’t need or want to see."
• "Transportation/financial/privacy barriers to access providers. Fear going to Health Dept. or School Clinic: “Others will know I am sexually active.”
• "Can’t find reliable sources of Info. Cross checking of info is time consuming. Need it all to be in 1 place."

Social Media Desires
• Videos of professionals e.g. Mythbusters STD video
• Incorporation into school curricula
• STD of the week with personal stories
• Interactive page/room e.g. click on condoms on bed side table to learn more
• STD pictures
• STD Mobile App
• Connect with Twitter/Facebook
• Abstinence content
• Statistics. Blast messages. Include Gender data.
• STD Content Website linked to Facebook
• Counseling resources-rape, sexual violence
• Content on ways to say no—warning signs and how to get out of a scary situation
• Website developed for parental education
• Easy to Navigate/Uncluttered Apps/Website
• Live anonymous chats with providers
• Locations/hours of service for local STD clinics

Impact on Sexual Health
• Increase condom use, STD testing, monogamy, and honest sharing of sexual history.
• "It will encourage me to use protection. Gotta say, it scared me a bit. I didn’t know all that stuff."
• "Changed my view on life and protecting myself. When we was looking at the site, I kept thinking I wish I knew this a few years ago."
• "It would help to know where to go when something is wrong-if you’re itching, you aren’t feeling right, you need to know where to go for help."
• "This is going to be my go to health page. One stop shop for all of your STD needs."
• "You know during guy talk, I would bring [the site] up. I look out for my friends."
• "When you’re in high school all you are ever told is to use condoms so you don’t get someone pregnant. That is all I was ever told in Health Ed class. No STD information was ever discussed."
• "My family would approve of this site."
• "All it can do is help."
• "Be open, tell us the truth."

Conclusions
• Facebook is an ideal site for the dissemination of messaging to increase STD knowledge and awareness.
• Participants reported a lack of awareness of susceptibility/consequences of STD infection.
• A common theme was the need to stress risk and possible consequences of unprotected intercourse engagement among the population.
• Current messaging was seen as unreliable for sourcing, condescending and judgmental directed towards youth, and not vibrant nor appealing to the technology proficient learner of today.

Recommendations
• Researchers should identify all issues/barriers when developing social media interventions.
• Consider the use of virtual technology, personal stories, local statistics, and mobile applications to reach these youth.
• Sites should be visually appealing, easy to navigate, and uncluttered.
• Researchers should model our incorporation of high school and college students as peer moderators who immeasurably strengthened this process by providing a supportive environment for peer engagement on this sensitive topic.

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