

Young Adult Males' Attitudes, Perceptions and Behaviours in Regards to Male Condoms in Cambodia: A Qualitative Study

Authors : Rebecca Johnson, Elizabeth Hoban

Abstract : Condom use among young men in Cambodia has declined between 2005 and 2014 which has public health implications such as increased risks of sexually transmitted infections, including HIV, and unplanned pregnancies. Conversations about sexual and reproductive health issues, including condom use, are not socially sanctioned in Cambodian society leaving young adults with limited knowledge of, and poor access to sexual and reproductive health services. Additionally, men play a dominant role in decision making regarding condom use within sexual partnerships. This study sought to fill a gap in knowledge by exploring young adult males' attitudes, perceptions and behaviours regarding condom use. In February and March 2018, twenty young adult males, aged 18 to 24 years, were recruited from urban, peri urban and rural areas in Cambodia. The young adult males participated in a face-to-face semi structured interview that used an interview guide and photo elicitation method. The interview explored participants' knowledge of sexual and reproductive health issues and efficacy, sexual behaviours, and use of condoms. Inductive thematic analysis was conducted and the following major themes emerged: understanding of reproduction, understanding of sexually transmitted infections, knowledge about condoms, condom use, access to condoms, and sexual behaviour. Participants' knowledge of condoms and specific reasons for their use varied; most participants understood that condoms provide protection from sexually transmitted infections and prevent pregnancy. Stigma associated with condom access was consistently referred to as a problem and the main reason cited by young men for not using condoms during sexual intercourse. The perceived importance of condom use altered with partner type and relationship status, dependent upon the need for protection from sexually transmitted infections or pregnancy. Condoms were used for infection control in the context of multiple relationships, or as a contraceptive method for unmarried and some married couples. The majority of young men engaged in premarital sexual intercourse, of those men the many used condoms. The inconsistent use of condoms by young men in Cambodia is of public health concern because of the increased risk of sexually transmitted infections (including HIV), and unplanned pregnancy. Public health action is required in order to minimize long term health issues for individuals and the community. Health education is required to increase knowledge of condom use, sexually transmitted infections and HIV, and reduce the stigma associated with this topic. Sustainable health promotion programs are needed to increase ease of access to condoms for young people. Public health policy in Cambodia needs to be reviewed to improve sexual and reproductive health outcomes for young adults.

Keywords : Cambodia, condom use, sexual and reproductive health, young adult males

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