Factors Associated with Sexually Transmitted Infections in Under-16s Attending a GUM Clinic

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Introduction:

The aim of this piece of research was to establish whether the number of sexual partners and presence of vulnerability factors were associated with increased risk of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) in under-16 year olds.

Methods:

A standardised electronic proforma was used to capture data on under-16 year olds attending an inner city Genito-Urinary Medicine (GUM) clinic over the course of a year (01/01/15–31/12/15). Data was collected for the following criteria: demographics; appointment type; postcode; prevalence of STIs; pregnancy status; contraception; number of sexual partners; and vulnerability factors (e.g. mental health conditions, drug use, history of abuse, known to outside agencies, gang involvement).

Results:

There were 236 attendances by 124 patients, of which 89/124 (72%) were new appointments and 35/124 (28%) were rebook appointments.

Location

50/124 (40%) patients were resident in the same borough as the GUM clinic. 59/124 (48%) were from neighbouring boroughs.

Gender

107/124 (86%) of the total number of patients studied were female and 17/124 (14%) were male.

Ethnicity

54/124 (43%) were White British, 32/124 (26%) were Caribbean and 15/124 (12%) were African.

Median age at first attendance

14.6 years (range 12-15).

Contraception/Pregnancy (at first attendance)

47/88 (53%) patients were using contraception, the most common forms being the male condom and combined oral contraceptive pill. 23/107 (21%) of females had a pregnancy test performed, of which 2/23 (8.7%) were positive.

Instance of STIs (at first attendance)

31/124 (25%) were either diagnosed with an STI or were a contact of someone with an STI. The absolute numbers for these figures were as follows: Chlamydia (21); Gonorrhoea (5); PID (2); HSV (2); HIV (1). Of those above, 9/31 (29%) reported one or more vulnerability factor. 93/124 (75%) patients were not diagnosed with an STI, of which 27/93 (29%) reported one or more vulnerability factor.

Average number of sexual partners (at first attendance)

The average number of sexual partners among those with an STI was 3.45 (range 0-15), while the average number of sexual partners for those not diagnosed with an STI was 1.75 (range 0-20).

Discussion:

29% of patients (36/124) attending the clinic had one or more vulnerability factor. Under 16s diagnosed with an STI were not significantly more likely to have a vulnerability factor than those who were not diagnosed with an STI. However, those diagnosed with an STI had a greater number of sexual partners than those without a diagnosis (3.45 vs 1.75 partners) suggesting an association between increased number of partners and instance of STIs.