

# RAP\* Time



## RURAL CENTER *for* AIDS/STD PREVENTION

A JOINT PROJECT OF  
INDIANA UNIVERSITY & PURDUE UNIVERSITY

\*Rural AIDS/STD prevention. rap (rap) v. Slang. To talk freely and openly. Vol. 3, No. 11, November 5, 1999

## One-Third of Sexually Active Women at Risk for STD Because of Multiple Sex Partnerships

The more sexual partners a person has, the greater the chance of having a partner infected with an STD and becoming infected with an STD oneself. A person with only one partner may be placed at risk, indirectly, if their partner has multiple partners.

This study explored STD risk and condom use of women surveyed in the National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG), supplemented by data about women and men surveyed in the General Social Survey (GSS).

### Methodology

STD risk was defined as having two or more sexual partners in the past year (multiple partnerships). Direct risk described persons with two or more partners and indirect risk was if the person's partner had one or more other partners.

Data from the 1988 and the 1995 NSFG, and each year 1988 to 1996 of the GSS were analyzed. The sample sizes ranged from 1,372 to 10,847.

### Outcomes of the Study

- Major findings include:
- Combining women's and

men's partnership reports indicated that 17 million women aged 15-44--about 34% of those sexually active in the past year--were at risk for STDs because of direct exposure to multiple partners (5.4 million), indirect exposure (6.3 million) or both direct and indirect exposure (5.5 million).

- In all, 21% of women were at direct risk and 23% were at indirect risk.
- Among men aged 18-44, 24% were a direct risk for STDs and an unknown proportion were at indirect risk.
- Unmarried individuals, women younger than 40 and men aged 20-29, and blacks and women in the South were all at elevated risk for STDs because of multiple partnerships.
- In 1995, 19% of sexually active women aged 15-44 had used condoms to protect against STDs in the past year.
- Condom use specifically for STD prevention was more common among women reporting direct and indirect risk for STDs (58%) and among those at direct risk (46%) than among other women.
- Women whose partners put

them at indirect risk only were less likely to be current or recent condom users than women who were not at risk or were only at direct risk.

- Twenty percent of women at risk of STDs through multiple partnerships reported, and presumably thought, that they were in mutually exclusive sexual relationships.
- At least 75% of sexually active women and men in the late 1980s and mid-1990s had only one sex partner in the past 12 months. The proportion with more than one partner in the past year did not substantially change.

### Implications for Prevention

Efforts to educate people regarding their risk for STDs should continue. Further, better education of the public is needed about the increased risk of having multiple sexual partners and the value of barrier methods.

SOURCE: Finer, L. B., et al. (1999). Sexual partnership patterns as a behavioral risk factor for sexually transmitted diseases. *Family Planning Perspectives*, 31, 228-236.

## Visual and Verbal Cues Used to Judge if Partner Has STD

This study examined partner assessments and high-risk sexual encounters among STD clinic patients in South California. Subjects were 42 English-speaking persons with ages ranging from 18 to 60. Twelve focus groups were conducted.

Participants indicated that they did not use condoms when they perceived new sexual partners as being safe from disease. Instead of directly discussing their partner's sexual history, they relied on both visual and verbal cues to judge if their partner was clean, or disease-free. This assessment process reflected an error in judgement, particularly because most of the participants had already contracted a STD.

Participants reported they used a condom if the sexual encounter is "on the side" to protect their partner and avoid "getting caught", if the person is unclean (e.g. if exchanging sex for crack cocaine), and if it is the first sexual encounter with a new partner.

SOURCE: Hoffman, V., & Cohen, D. (1999). A night with Venus: Partner assessments and high-risk sexual encounters. *AIDS Care*, 11, 555-566.

## Parental Monitoring Decreases Sexual Initiation Among Youth

Youth residing in high-poverty urban settings are at increased risk for adverse developmental and health outcomes, and African American adolescents are particularly vulnerable. One outcome, early sexual initiation, has possible serious consequences.

This study assessed if parental strategies to monitor their children's social behavior and to communicate with them about sexual risks help reduce initiation of sexual activity. African American youth, aged 9 to 17 years (N=355), living in urban public housing were surveyed using a talking computer.

Children who reported high levels of parental monitoring were less likely to report initiating sex in pre-adolescence and reported lower rates of sexual initiation as they aged. Communication was positively related to the initiation of and consistent condom use. The protective correlates of parenting strategies were independent of the type of guardian (mother vs other family member).

SOURCE: Romer D., et al. (1999). Parental influence on adolescent sexual behavior in high-poverty settings. *Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine*, 153, 1055-1062.

## About 40% of Teen Women Report Coitus in Past Three Months

The proportion of teen women who ever had sexual intercourse increased somewhat during the 1980s and stabilized between the late 1980s and the mid-1990s. About 40% of all 15-19 year olds reported coitus in the last three months. Differences in sexual behavior across poverty and racial/ethnic subgroups narrowed over the 13-year period.

SOURCE: Singh, S., & Darroch, J. E. (1999). Trends in sexual activity among adolescent American women: 1982-1995. *Family Planning Perspectives*, 31, 213-219.

## Syphilis Cases at Record Low

The number and rate of primary and secondary syphilis cases reported for 1998 in the United States are record lows. Fifty percent of cases occurred in fewer counties than in 1997, and the number of cases in most of these counties declined in 1998. About 80% of U.S. counties reported no infectious syphilis.

SOURCE: CDC. Primary and secondary syphilis--United States, 1998. *MMWR*, 48(39), 873-878.



**RAP Time** is a monthly publication of the Rural Center for AIDS/STD Prevention (RCAP). RCAP is a joint project of Indiana University, Bloomington and Purdue University, West Lafayette, Indiana. The major focus of RCAP is the promotion of HIV/STD prevention in rural America, with the goal of reducing HIV/STD incidence. The opinions expressed here do not necessarily reflect those of Indiana University or Purdue University.

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