

Communication on contraception and knowledge about oral contraception amongst Norwegian high school students

T. Hansen, F.E. Skjeldestad

Section of Epidemiological Research, Unimed SINTEF, Trondheim, Norway

Objective: To study communication on contraception and knowledge about oral contraceptives (OC) among Norwegian teenagers ages 16-18.

Methods: Analyses are based on questionnaire data from 3103 high school students in Trondheim, Norway (response rate 73%). Knowledge about OC was assessed through 15 questions comprising three separate indices and a total index. Logistic regression analyses were used to examine age, communication on contraception, sexual activity and OC use as predictors of high scores on knowledge indices amongst males and females.

Results: Females discussed contraception more frequently than males. Openness was mainly directed towards friends and few subjects frequently discussed contraception with parents or health workers. On the 15 questions about OC, females gave significantly more correct answers than males (on average 7 and 4, respectively). Subjects were relatively knowledgeable about physical changes during OC use (index I) and about the pill's relative efficacy (index II). Knowledge was particularly poor on how OC use affects the risk of cancer and thromboembolism (index III). In logistic regression analyses, gender and OC use were strong predictors of high knowledge scores. Adequate knowledge appeared to be one of the prerequisites for use and use seemed to motivate for acquisition of information. Moreover, high knowledge scores were associated with frequent discussions on contraception. Age and sexual activity were less significant predictors of OC knowledge.

Conclusion: Implications of the present findings include emphasis on openness and knowledge at an early age and teaching males communicative skills to facilitate discussions on contraception.