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## SEXUAL BEHAVIOR OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS FROM A COLLEGE IN SOUTHWEST OF BAHIA CONCERNING THE USE OF CONDOM

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### ABSTRACT

Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) have been a major concern in all age groups, especially in adolescents and adults, due to their sexual behavior towards the use of condoms and the increase of contamination. STIs are a public health problem and the unprotected sex act is the main way of transmission. Therefore, the objective of this study was to analyze the perception of the students of a college in the Southwest of Bahia, regarding the use of condoms and their importance. The specific objectives are: to identify the level of information of the students regarding the importance of the use of condoms; to know the main causes for not using condoms; to verify the socio-demographic profile of the students who participated of this research. It was a descriptive research of a quantitative nature, data were collected through a semi-structured questionnaire and transferred to Microsoft Excel 2010 XP worksheet and tabulated, later submitted to the analysis through descriptive statistics. After analyzing the data, it was concluded that young people, even aware of diseases risk, do not use condoms in order to prevent them.

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### INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) have been one of the major public health problems. According to the Ministry of Health of Brazil, STIs can be caused either by fungi, viruses or bacteria, but its main form of transmission is by sexual contact that can be oral, vaginal or anal. They are also acquired congenitally (from mother to child during gestation, childbirth or breastfeeding). Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STD) was the term used before, but it was changed to STI, since an individual can have and transmit an infection even without symptoms. The most frequent age group is adolescents and adults when compared with other population groups (Santos and Gonçalves, 2016). This fact occurs because a large part of the adolescents initiate their sexual life in advance, thus being more vulnerable to STIs (Bezerra et al., 2015).

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The safest form of prevention is the use of condoms, but some customs are still ingrained. It is possible to perceive that the valorization of the condom is more frequent among women, since they show greater concern in relation to get pregnant (Bezerra et al., 2015). Another factor that influences the non-use of condoms may be associated with lack of attention and information. Even though young people have a higher level of schooling, it is still not enough, since it is noted that the number of adolescents who know about preservative methods but do not use them remains high (Bezerra et al., 2015). The university is a space that can be the target of preventive and intervention activities, because it contains a high number of young people who are at the peak of their sexuality. It is curious that those people do not use the condom as a method of prevention, even though they are aware about sexually transmitted infections (Sales et al., 2016). Thus, it is observed that both educational and health sectors must provide educational activities and projects, in order to aware of the necessity of the use of condoms so that the young people can

prevent the contagion of diseases. Such actions are also important to break this paradigm that sexual intercourse with condom is not pleasurable or that it is used only to avoid pregnancy. It is important to emphasize that regardless of the contraceptive method (pill, IUD or injectable) used to avoid an unwanted pregnancy, it is always necessary to use the condom, since it is the only method which protects from the IST's.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research is quantitative and descriptive and proposes to evaluate the sexual behavior of undergraduate students concerning the use of condoms. A research is quantitative when it is possible to quantify the results using specific instruments, with mathematical language to report and interpret the data collected (Gerhardt and Silveira, 2009). The descriptive research aims to answer several questions, seeking to describe and delimit a subject, observing its problems according to people or events (Cooper and Schindler, 2016). A semi-structured questionnaire interview was held with students from several undergraduate courses at a college in Southwest of Bahia, in August 2018. This semi-structured questionnaire "is a face-to-face conversation in a methodical way, which gives the interviewer the necessary information" (Marconi and Lakatos, 2013). The study was approved by the Ethics and Research Committee of the Faculdade Independente do Nordeste (FAINOR), through opinion no. 2,769,921, in July 13th, 2018. There were 67 participants on the research. The objectives of the study were presented and then they were invited to voluntarily participate in the research. All of them were students. A semi structured questionnaire elaborated by the researchers was used for data collection, in accordance with the objectives established by the research. This instrument has inquiries about the sexual behavior of the population studied and their knowledge about the importance of condom use. The data will be analyzed and tabulated through the SPSS program version 24, 2017, presenting statistically the information acquired in the field. Since this research had direct contact with the human being, all the parameters were followed in a correct way in order to maintain the respect and the dignity of the individual. It used the principles of resolution 466/12 that brings us information to conduct research with human beings. Data collection was only performed after the signing of the Free and Informed Consent Form.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

According to the acquired results, regarding the sociodemographic profile, it was realized that 76.1% of the respondents were female and 23.8% male, and most of them (78%) were between 18 and 21 years old. It was also observed that 44.8% had income of up to 2 minimum wages and 34.3% more than 4 minimum wages. Despite women represent the greater number of participants, it was perceived that they were not as comfortable as men were to participate on the research, since they reported a feeling of embarrassment to answer questions about sex. About family income, it was verified that the majority of the students belongs to middle class. Concerning the age analyzed, it was concluded that it is proportional to the period of the undergraduation course they were studying. Despite some studies indicate a higher frequency of cases involving STIs among males, this male/female relationship has been decreasing over time, bringing up the phenomenon of feminization. Research also

shows that these infections most often occur between the second and fourth decade of life, but not only young people should be targeted in campaigns to prevent STIs. It is necessary to emphasize that the majority of the infected population belong to the less favored classes (Bertoni *et al.*, 2010; Pieri and Laureti, 2012). Of the respondents, 61.1% reported that they practice regular sex with only one partner, 29.9% reported they do not have sex and 9% reported they have sexual relation with multiple partners. Of these, only 38.8% reported the use of condoms in every sexual relation. From the answers, it can be affirmed that undergraduate students have an active sex life and do not use condom, which means they are more vulnerable to acquiring STIs. Young university students seem to have low risk perception and do not consider themselves vulnerable to health problems. Gender characteristics prove this evidence by recognizing sexual freedom and domination among men and passivity among women (Bezerra *et al.*, 2012; Dessunti and Reis, 2012). It is necessary to guide and educate young people in order to provide knowledge acquisition about sexual health and sexual behavior (FNUAP, 2005). About the first concern after unprotected intercourse, 46.3% reported worrying about pregnancy, 32.9% about diseases and 5.9% do not care, 14.9% did not answer the question. Different aspects are involved in the vulnerability of young people to STIs such as early sexual initiation, consumption of alcohol and other drugs, acceptance and gender issues. Being a university student increases the vulnerability of young people, since many of them consider themselves informed enough (Santos and Oliveira, 2009). Young people seem to be less concerned about STI acquisition than about pregnancy prevention, even when they are aware about risks, which highlights the complex nature of vulnerability to infection (Santos and Oliveira, 2009; Dessunti and Reis, 2007). Regarding students' knowledge about STIs, 86.6% reported being aware about diseases. About the methods of prevention, 91% answered it should be with condom and 6% with contraceptive patches. When questioned about how many unprotected sexual relations are necessary to get infected, 83.6% responded "only one", 10.4% did not respond, 4.5% answered "in the second time" and 1.5% did not know what to respond. Regarding the way of transmission, 79.1% answered for vaginal, oral and anal sex, 9% for vaginal sex only, 5.9% for vaginal and anal sex, 4.5% for oral sex and 1.5% just anal sex.

Universal access to prevention appointments and methods is a privileged way to reduce STIs numbers, but there are still obstacles such as lack of information and apprehension about confidentiality. It is known that women have a greater tendency to use hormonal contraceptives, while men tend to use the condom. Nevertheless, there are two factors that determine the replacement of condom use, such as older age and fixed sexual partner. Although it is expected that university students have more knowledge about the subject, it is observed through studies that they still do not cooperate with this expectation (Santos *et al.*, 2018). Considering they are university students, the quantity of those who still do not know the STIs (13.4%) is significant, as well as the lack of knowledge about the preventive methods, since they still believe that the contraceptive method of adhesive can prevent a disease. The number of people who reported that transmission only occurs from the second sexual intercourse was also significant. Although most know about transmission, there are still many people who do not know about prevention. It is likely that students who do not understand the risks to

which they are exposed may disregard the importance of condom to prevent sexual infections, which makes them vulnerable not only to STIs but also to the occurrence of unwanted pregnancy and abortion (Brasil, 2012; Maia *et al.*, 2008). Concerning tests to detect as IST'S, the most important ones were done by the participants: hepatitis (55.2%), followed by syphilis (32.9%), HTLV (31.3%), and the less accomplished was HIV with only 29.9%. It is noticed that even knowing the risks of the diseases, they still are afraid of the results of the tests, especially the HIV test. Counseling provides the recognition of necessary resources to health care, to prevent new infections, and to provide the user an active participation in the relation patient/health care professional. Its main objectives are: to access the diagnosis of STIs, to reduce the transmission risks and to stimulate the diagnosis of sexual partners. There are still a large number of cases that reach the specialized units by reference, which shows us a large index of cases that are diagnosed late (Deianno *et al.*, 2010).

### Final considerations

Youth is a period of many discoveries and changes, especially for those who are in the academic environment, where they leave their family environment, begin to experience more adult behavior, alcohol, illicit drugs, discovering their sexuality and their bodies, becoming a more independent being, when they begin to make their own decisions. Facing these aspects, university students become more vulnerable to acquiring more diseases such as STIs. During this study, it was noticed that most students do not have adequate information about STIs and also their correct preventive methods. Even though they are expected to have a higher level of knowledge because they are university students, it is still possible to observe that they do not use condom in every sexual relation and that their first concern is still to prevent an unwanted pregnancy. Thus, it is concluded that it is necessary a greater dedication of educational sectors with a focus on sexuality and prevention of diseases, stimulating the precaution among young people and reinforcing the importance of preventive methods.

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