Reviewer's report

Title: Chlamydia trachomatis infection and sexual behaviour among female third level students in Ireland.

Version: 1 Date: 26 June 2009

Reviewer: Hannah Madden

Reviewer's report:

Generally a valuable paper with some interesting results. This will be a good opportunity to publish chlamydia prevalence figures and risk information for this group in this country but the article is not quite there yet. The methods section needs more detail as there is currently very little information on procedure, tools or sampling. If the authors can elaborate on these areas and clarify some issues below it will be worth publication. Happy to review again if resubmitted.

Major Compulsory Revisions (which the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

1. You need to explain what 3rd level is. This term is not known out of Ireland. Is this 3rd year college/university students? There is no explanation of this term and it is included in the title which will need to change. What age group is this? Was age collected? Need to ensure this can be understood by an international audience
2. Need to subdivide the methods and include more information on procedure tools etc.
3. Need more information about the questionnaire design? Was it open questions/tick boxes etc?
4. How were participants recruited? Who approached them? Reception staff/nurses?
5. Please elaborate on the sampling frame. Explain ‘on consecutive days’ – how many days in total? You state consecutive but then give no more information. In abstract you say ‘one day periods’? Needs clarification.
6. Please clarify inclusion/exclusion criteria – were all women who attended October 04 to March 05 asked?
7. There is no descriptive information about the participants. Can you provide a table of descriptive statistics? There is more info about non-responders than the actual participants
8. “Limited information on non-responders” – what were they asked? Can you compare this to participants in a table?
9. Was age collected? Can you provide mean/median/range in results? Especially important if you’re recommending screening it needs to be age specific screening (eg in UK <25)
Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

10. Results – odds ratios are not really being presented as odds in text – increased odds of what? Being CT positive or negative?

11. Can you clarify which area of Ireland – Republic or Eire? An international reader might interpret this as North and South

Discretionary Revisions (which are recommendations for improvement but which the author can choose to ignore)

12. Information about SHUs in 3 institutes in 2 cities is only mentioned in abstract. Can you elaborate in Methods?

13. No mention of the non-respondents in the limitations

14. Discussion “Also of concern 32% (15) of students with an STI report that they were not advised about partner notification” Is this 32% of the participants in this study? Was this on the questionnaire? Not included in results. If it is not from your study what is the reference? Also should this be with a chlamydia report not STI report?

15. Abstract “The prevalence of C. trachomatis infection and the lack of awareness of the significance of symptoms among sexually experienced female students demonstrates the need for a programme to test asymptomatic or non-presenting women.” Could more adequately explain the importance of lack of symptoms. Public health implications?

16. Limitations – no mention that those who seek care from SHU are actually seeking health care. States they differ from general public and from other students going to family doctor. But what about difference to students who don’t seek any medical care? There may be risk taking clusters that are encouraging them to attend SHU that mean they are more at risk of chlamydia?

17. “Two or more one night stands and 3 or more lifetime sexual partners significantly increase the risk of a positive result. These sexual history questions could be asked during a consultation.” Why? Can you state what this would achieve and state public health/clinical implications?

18. What do you mean by ‘three institutes’ – define earlier in methods. First time they are mentioned is ‘the three institutes were compared for sociodemographic factors’ at end of methods.

19. “Risk factor data is also comparable; the risk level for three or more lifetime sexual partners at 3.6 being very similar to that recorded by Imai for Japanese female students (OR 3.4) and the odds ratio of 2.5 for current symptoms corresponding to that for American students of 2.1.” can you reword to clarify? Phrasing is confusing as you are talking about risk level in relation to odds ratios?

Other articles that may be of interest to the authors:


**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests