

SJSM Science

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Youth risk behavior in Anguilla

Challenging the authorities seems the main and the most important activity during the transition from the childhood to adulthood – if you ask parents. But SJSM students know that it is only partially true. They know that during this period youngsters also establish patterns of behavior and lifestyle choices that will affect their present and their future. Are those choices healthy? Are those behaviors risky? Should we ask their families, peers, teachers...or should we ask youngsters themselves?

In US every academic research on adolescent health behaviors is based on only two official sources of information: The Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) conducted by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention and the University of Michigan's Monitoring the Future (MTF). YRBS and MTF evaluate unintentional injuries and

violence, smoking, drinking, drug use, diet, sexual activity, physical activity and other health-related issues to monitor priority health-risk behaviors and the prevalence of certain health conditions.

YRBS is administered every other year to a random sample of middle school and high school US students. Student participation is voluntary and anonymous. Results of the YRBS are used:

- for evaluation of initiatives to decrease risk behaviors taken by federal, state, and local public health authorities
- as guidelines for government agencies, community organizations, schools, and other community members to organize a comprehensive collaboration in promoting healthy lifestyles in youth
- for determining how significant are other factors (environment, family, peer group, society) for developing health and risk behaviors

Those surveys and actions are of outermost importance because establishing healthy behaviors earlier in life is easier and more effective than trying to change unhealthy behaviors later on during the adulthood (opposite also applies!)

SJSM students were curious to find out

Are students in other parts of the world as healthy, risky or scandalous as students in US?



Youth Risky Behavior in Anguilla

Sandra Frimpong, Yinka Orafidiya, and Jessica Rader

Introduction

High risk behaviors are those that can have adverse effects on the overall development and wellbeing of youth, or those that might prevent them from future successes and development.

Purpose

The purpose of our research study is to determine the types and prevalence of high risk behaviors in Anguilla youths within the age group of 12-18 years

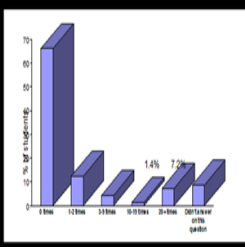
Material and Methods

- Sample: 138 students; 12-18 y/o, 33% boys, 67% girls.
- Youth Risk Behavior Survey Questionnaire (YRBSQ) adapted:

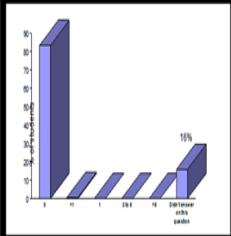
1. Unintentional injuries and violence
2. Tobacco use
3. Alcohol use
4. Drug use
5. Sexual behaviors
6. Unhealthy dietary behaviors
7. Physical inactivity
8. Behaviors with cumulative negative effects

Results

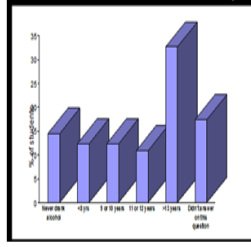
Q: How many times in your life have you used marijuana?



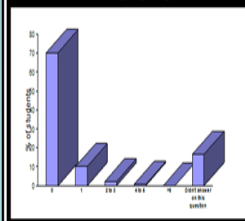
Q: In the past 30 days, how many cigarettes have you smoked per day?



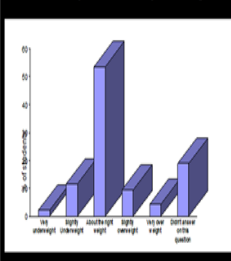
Q: How old were you when you had your first drink of alcohol more than a few sips?



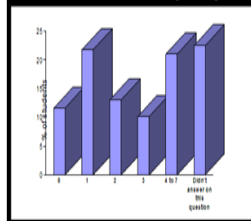
Q: In the past 12 months how many times were you involved in physical violence on school property?



Q: How do you describe your weight?



Q: During the past 7 days, on how many days were you physically active for a total of at least 60 minutes per day?



Results of previous study in other Caribbean Island

1. The prevalence of substance use: cigarettes-24% and marijuana-17%
2. High risk sexual behavior: initiation of sexual activity ≤ 10 years old-19% and those having more than six partners-19%
3. Teenage pregnancy: teens account for 15-20% of all pregnancies and one-fifth of these teens were in their second pregnancy
4. Sexually-Transmitted Infections (STIs): population prevalence of gonorrhea and/or Chlamydia in 18-21 year-olds was 26%
5. Mental health: severe depression in the adolescent age group was 9%, and attempted suicide-12%
6. Violence and juvenile delinquency: carrying a weapon to school in the last 30 days-10% and almost always wanting to kill or injure someone-5%
7. Eating disorders and obesity: overweight-11%, and obesity-7%

Discussion

Several high risk behaviors have been of particular interest to professionals because of their prevalence in youth today. Many of these behaviors cause a large number of deaths and injury among teens, or have negative impacts on society. Monitoring health-risk behaviors that contribute to the leading causes of death and disability among youth and adults helps in developing the strategy most appropriate for the state, country, territory, tribe or local school. Awareness amongst school children regarding preventive medicine and health education may have key role in improving overall behavioral health.

Conclusion:

The study did help to identify the types and prevalence of high risk behaviors among Anguilla youths. We are hoping that the results obtained from study will be an eye opener for the Anguillians and that steps would be taken to abate or prevent those risks. SJSSM will continue to assist and educate the community about the danger and impacts of those high risk behaviors on their health. The results of our report indicate a need for continued monitoring of health-risk behaviors among students.

Recommendations (How can SJSSM help?)

- Create more awareness of smoking, sexual and gang-related issues in Anguilla
- Educate the students of the implications of risky behaviors
 - Fliers
 - Speakers (medical student/faculty)
- Create a program that can assist students and community to quit smoking.

Supervisors: Dr. Podcheko, Dr. Iliou, Dr. Patil

Readings:

Rohan G et al. Child Adolescent Psychiatry Mental Health. 2009
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Youth Risk Behavior Survey. Available at: www.cdc.gov/yrbs.