Sexual Preventative Health in Women Who Have Sex with Women

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“Women who have sex with women” (WSW) is a distinction made despite self-identified sexual orientation and can include those who identify as lesbians, bisexuals and even heterosexuals. Due to the misconception that this population only has sex with women, it is often believed that these patients are at lower risk for sexually transmitted infections. However, Bauer and Welles (2001) found that 74% of self-identified lesbians had engaged in intercourse with both males and females, that female-female sexual interactions were associated with a significant risk of STIs, and that the WSW population received STI testing less often than their heterosexual counterparts. Therefore, it is important to be able to discuss risk factors and preventative techniques with WSW patients. Risk factors to discuss are: number of partners, type of sexual behaviors, the gender of sexual partners, and time of the month of sexual intercourse. Safer sex techniques can include barrier methods, proper hand, body and sex toy hygiene, cognitive timing of sexual intercourse, and contraceptive options. In order to discuss the appropriate risk factors, preventative techniques, and to administer the proper screening, a physician must be comfortable eliciting the type of sexual intercourse and gender of partners. This workshop will give providers the knowledge needed to respectfully obtain a thorough sexual history and the information necessary to counsel WSW patients effectively on safer sex practices.
SEXUAL PREVENTATIVE HEALTH IN WOMEN WHO HAVE SEX WITH WOMEN

Kaitlyn McCune
DISCLOSURES

• No financial disclosures
• Cisgender
• Lesbian

• Sexually explicit discussion
OUTLINE

• Definitions/language
• Demographics
• Risks and research
• What healthcare professionals can do
• Closing with questions
• References
DEFINITIONS AND LANGUAGE

• Identity/orientation
  • Heterosexual
  • Homosexual
  • Lesbian
  • Gay
  • Bisexual
  • Pansexual
  • Asexual
  • Queer
  • Questioning

• Behavior:
  • Women who have sex with women (WSW)
  • Men who have sex with men (MSM)
  • A distinction made despite self-identified sexual orientation/identity
DEMOGRAPHICS

• Most studies show that between 7% and 24% of WSW have never had a male sexual partner

• 2006-2008 National Survey of Family Growth
  • 4.6% identified as lesbian or bisexual
  • 12.5% displayed WSW behavior
RISKS IN WSW POPULATION

• WSW population NOT at lower risk
  • Have lower rates of testing

• At risk for:
  • Bacterial vaginosis
  • Hepatitis B
  • Genital warts
  • Trichomoniasis
  • Chlamydia
  • Pelvic inflammatory disease
  • HIV
CDC: Rare female-to-female HIV transmission

By Ashley Hayes, CNN
updated 4:06 PM EDT, Thu March 13, 2014
WHAT HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS CAN DO: OVERVIEW

• Create a safe space
• Don’t be judgmental or make assumptions
• Take a good sexual history
• Discuss safe sex techniques
• Promote regular testing
• Screen for concerns and abuse
• Know the resources in your area
BE A SAFE PLACE

• Safe Zone Program training
  • Offered in multiple locations in Iowa and beyond
• Small rainbow stickers or pins
• Use gender inclusive language
• Ask what pronouns your patient prefers
• Don’t be judgmental or make assumptions
TAKE A GOOD SEXUAL HISTORY

• “Men/women/both” is not sufficient
  • Not everyone identifies with that binary

• Be detailed about what sexual behaviors they’re engaging in
  • Necessary for screening the right places

• Discuss other risk behaviors
  • IVDU
  • Sexual contact with Drug Use
- Vaginal-vaginal
- Vaginal-Penile
- Genital-oral
- Oral-anal
- Penile-anal
- Vaginal-digital
- Anal-digital
- Sex toy-anal
- Sex toy-vaginal
- Sex toy-oral
- Fisting
DISCUSS SAFE SEX TECHNIQUES

- Contraceptives
- Barriers
- Lubrication
- Hygiene
- Timing
BARRIERS

- Vinyl vs Latex vs Nitrile
- Condoms
  - “Male”
  - “Female”
- Finger guards and gloves
- Dental Dams
LUBRICATION

• Reduces risk of small lacerations

• Types

• Compatibility with toys and barrier methods
HYGIENE

- Trimmed and clean nails
- Wash all toys
- Change barriers
TIMING

- Risks of sex during menstruation
- Avoid contact during outbreaks
PROMOTE REGULAR TESTING

• #1 risk factor: number of sexual partners

• WSW receive regular testing less often

• STI Testing Guidelines
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<td>Screen if sexual partner has HSV</td>
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<td>Do not screen for subclinical infection</td>
<td>Insufficient evidence to use as primary screening test for cervical cancer</td>
<td>Testing with a Pap smear is an option for women older than 30 years</td>
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SCREEN FOR CONCERNS AND ABUSE

• False belief that WSW inter partner violence is rare

• Studies show same-sex violence is not insignificant

• Screen for abuse or violence

• Also screen for other concerns
KNOW YOUR RESOURCES

• Planned Parenthood
• Emma Goldman Clinic
• Campus Health Centers
• UI LGBTQ Clinic
• Free Mental Health Counseling
• Free STD Screening Centers

• Fethers, K., Marks, C., Mindel, A., & Estcourt, C. S. (2000). Sexually transmitted infections and risk behaviors in women who have sex with women. *Sexually Transmitted Infections, 76*(5), 345-349. doi: 10.1136/sti.76.5.345


QUESTIONS?