

MENTAL HEALTH DISTRESS AND ALCOHOL MISUSE ASSOCIATED WITH PREVALENCE OF SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS AMONG ADOLESCENTS IN CARE

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Introduction: Every year 4,000 to 5,000 adolescents reside in Quebec Youth Protection Centers (YPCs). Many youth have risky behaviours and mental health issues that put them at risk for sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

Objectives: Document the prevalence of STIs (chlamydia and gonorrhoeae) among adolescents aged 14-17 years old entering Quebec residential YPCs and identify associated risk factors.

Methods: In 2008-2009, adolescents residing in six YPCs completed a questionnaire covering sexual and substance use behaviours, as well as other health issues affecting their well-being. Urine samples were collected for *Chlamydia trachomatis* (CTGI) and *Neisseria gonorrhoea* (NGGI) genital infections.

Results: Among 578 participants, 14-17 years old, 89% were sexually active. Risk behaviours included: early sexual initiation (66% < 14 years); multiple partners (median: girls 5, boys 8); group sex (girls 38%, boys 43%); sex for money or goods (girls 27%, boys 8%). Half of sexual relations were under the influence of drugs/alcohol. Regular substance use (3x weekly and +) was: tobacco: 75.0%; cannabis: 63.1%; alcohol: 24.2%; amphetamines: 16.7%; and cocaine: 7.4%. Prevalence of CTGI: 9.3% girls, 1.9 % boys; NGGI: 1.7% girls, 0% boys. In multivariate analysis, factors significantly associated with chlamydia infection among girls were: alcohol intoxication hospitalisation or history of suicide ideation with plan.

Conclusion: Serious alcohol misuse or mental distress were significantly associated with STI infections among adolescents. Mental health professionals are encouraged to provide sexual health and substance use counselling with adolescent patients given the highly woven interaction between mental distress and risk of sexually transmitted infections.