

Sexual health and disability: Data from national and state surveys

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Background and significance

- Surgeon General Satcher's *Call to Action to Promote Sexual Health and Responsible Sexual Behavior (2001)*: "There are persons with developmental, physical or mental disabilities whose sexuality and sexual needs have often been ignored, or at worst, exploited and abused."
- Creation of a "Center for Excellence in Sexual Health" at Morehouse School of Medicine
- Initiation of a "Disabilities, Chronic Conditions and Sexual Health Program" at Morehouse

Research question:
Is disability a risk factor for
unfavorable sexual health
outcomes?

Previous analyses

- APHA 2005: Analysis of National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG) showed persons with disabilities more likely to have had many partners, homosexual experience and identity, and been forced to have sex
- AASECT 2006: Presentation of NSFG findings to sex educators, counselors, and therapists
- In review 2007: Analysis of NHANES shows blood tests of persons with disabilities are more likely to be positive for herpes (HSV-2)

Goal of Presentation

- Are results of analyses of disability and sexual health outcomes comparable across four surveys?
 - National Health Interview Survey (NHIS, 2006);
 - National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG, 2002);
 - National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES, 2003-2004);
 - Behavioral Risk Factors Surveillance System, North Carolina (BRFSS, 2004).

About the four surveys . . .

Survey	Study population	Frequency	Study sample size	Interview mode
NSFG	Household 15-44 yrs	About every 5 yr	12,500	CAPI, ACASI
NHIS	Household 18+ yrs	Annual	30,000	CAPI, telephone
NHANES	Household 20+ yrs	Ongoing, 2 yr release	3,000	CAPI, ACASI
BRFSS	Household 18+ yrs	<i>Ad hoc</i>	15,000	CATI

Analytical Model and Variables of Interest

- Logistical regression models with survey design corrections
- Definition of disability: any health-related limitation of activity *or* use of special equipment because of a health problem
- Covariates: sexual union, gender, race, and age

Variables of Interest

- Outcomes:
 - Treated for sexually transmitted disease (NSFG, NHIS, NHANES, BRFSS (NC))
 - HIV risk (risk of becoming infected, any risk behaviors) (NHIS, BRFSS (NC))
 - Number of partners (10 or more) (NSFG, NHANES)
 - Same sex partner (NSFG, NHANES)

Summary of the results . . .

Survey	Relationship of sexual health-related outcomes or risk factors to disability, controlling for age, gender, race/ethnicity, and sexual union			
	Treated for STD	10 or more lifetime sex partners	Ever had partner of same sex	Self-assessed HIV risk
NSFG	Positive	Positive	Positive	Not available
NHIS	Positive	Not available	Not available	Negative
NHANES	Positive	Negative	Positive	Not available
BRFSS	Positive	Not available	Not available	Positive



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Treatment For Sexually Transmitted Disease

- Disability significantly and *positively* related to being treated for STD in NSFG, NHIS and BRFSS. Positive, insignificant coefficient for NHANES (2003-2004).
- Being male, older, and living with a partner *negatively* related to being treated for STD.

HIV Risk

- Disability *negatively* and significantly related to HIV Risk in NHIS (2006), but positively and significantly related to HIV Risk in BRFSS (NC), 2004;
- Different definitions of HIV Risk;
- Being male, black *positively* related to the HIV Risk; being older or living with a partner negatively related to HIV Risk.

Same Sex Partner

- Disability is *positively* related to ever having a same sex partner; the relationship is statistically significant only in NSFG.
- Living with a partner is *negatively* related to ever having a same sex partner;
- In NSFG being male, black or Hispanic also *negatively* and *significantly* related to ever having a same sex partner.

Number of Partners

- In NSFG, 2002 disability is ***positively*** and ***significantly*** related to having 10 or more partners; in NHANES the relationship is positive but not statistically significant.
- Being male is ***positively*** related to having 10 or more partners, and living with a partner is ***negatively*** related in both NSFG and NHANES.
- In NHANES being Black or being 31-44 years old is ***positively*** related to having 10 or more partners.

In conclusion . . .

- In 4 national and state surveys, 4 sexual health risk factors and outcomes were compared for persons with and without disabilities, with controls for covariates
- Of 10 possible comparisons, persons with disabilities were found to be at greater risk in 8, of which 6 were statistically significant
- Further analyses are planned to specify in greater detail the relationship between disability and sexual health

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