Aim

- The aim of this study was to investigate the relationship between condom use and safer sex communication amongst young heterosexual Australian men living in New South Wales
- This population is amongst the highest ‘at risk’ for STIs in Australia
Methods

- This study was guided by an interpretive phenomenological design
- 12 participants meeting the inclusion criteria were interviewed
- Inclusion criteria: Australian, identifying as male, single, heterosexual, residing in New South Wales and 18-26 years of age.
- Semi-structured face-to-face in-depth interviews were employed in order to investigate the lived experiences and attitudes of individuals in this demographic.
- Thematic Analysis was used to analyse the data

Findings

Inconsistencies between attitudes towards condom use, experiences of safer sex communication, and actual condom use were found.

Four themes were identified:
1. Talking about safe sex isn’t sexy;
2. Intentions do not necessarily predict use;
3. Knowledge and experience mitigates condom use efficacy; and
4. Safer sex decisions made based on assumed partner sexual safety.
Findings cont’d

- General attitudes towards condoms were unanimously positive, whereas engaging a sexual partner in discussion on condoms was experienced as uncomfortable.
  - "There’s so much subtlety involved and it’s all about not saying what you should say. And one of those things you should say is like ‘are there condoms?’ … It’s definitely a social thing." (Callum, 20 y.o.)

- Young men negotiated condom use with partners through strategies of humour, subtlety, directness or avoidance depending on their individual levels of motivation to use condoms.

- Intentions to use condoms were influenced by the individual’s circumstances and experiences.
  - "...my education on the issue, plus my personal experiences, mean that STIs are something that I’m more concerned about." (Trent, 24 y.o.)

- Factors influencing safer sex communication included assumptions about a partner’s sexual safety, level of knowledge and experience of social and sexual scripts.

So what?

- Sexuality education programs, public health campaigns and media organizations need to focus on normalising safer sex communication.

- Increased efforts through these mediums are needed to empower young people to become informed and celebrate their intentions to be sexually safe.

- Future research is needed to continue investigating the socio-relational aspects of safer sex.
Thank You!

Any Questions?

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