

Comprehensive sexuality and consent education among adolescents with intellectual disability in New South Wales, Australia

Authors:

Devkota A^{1,2}, Robards F¹, Zablotska-Manos, I¹

¹ Faculty of Medicine and Health, The University of Sydney, ² Western Sydney Sexual Health Centre, Western Sydney Local Health District, Parramatta, New South Wales, Australia

Background:

The developmentally appropriate comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) is grounded in major internationally accepted human rights. The International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education (ITGSE) Guidelines recognise CSE as an important component of adolescent health. However, various studies have highlighted a gap regarding disability-specific sexuality education among young people with intellectual disabilities resulting in lower levels of sexual health literacy.

An investigation of sexuality and consent education, its understanding and application among adolescents with intellectual disability is very timely as New South Wales implemented affirmative consent law recently in June 2022. There has been a decision to make the consent and respectful relationships curriculum mandatory and embedded in the national curriculum from 2023.

Methods:

The study will use mixed methods design employing socio-ecological model. Data will be collected using in-depth interviews with adolescents (12-19 years) with intellectual disability in both formal and community settings to explore how CSE knowledge is acquired. It will be supported by a cross-sectional survey with parents and carers. Key-informant interviews and focus group discussions will be conducted with teachers, disability, and health care providers to investigate the feasibility of providing CSE including structural resources, barriers, and enablers. The study will also identify the gaps in curricular contents targeted to adolescents with intellectual disability, needs for revision of existing teaching/support resource materials and for the professional development of key sexuality education providers.

Expected Results:

The findings will inform recommendations on the development of new approaches and improve student, parent, teachers, health and disability service providers' experience of intellectual disability-specific sexuality and consent education based on identified needs.

Conclusion:

The evidence generated by the study will inform recommendations to increase awareness, knowledge and skills on the CSE and consent education for adolescents with intellectual disability including sexuality education and care providers.

Disclosure of Interest Statement: None