

## Status of reproductive health knowledge for junior high school students in Guangzhou city

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**Objective** To understand the status of reproductive health knowledge for junior high school students in Guangzhou city and provide the base data for reproductive health education.

**Methods** A total of 1 210 students including 657 boys and 553 girls aged 12–15 years were surveyed with anonymous self-administrated questionnaire. The students were from a middle school in suburb of Guangzhou city. The questionnaire contained basic concepts of reproduction, love, sex, contraceptives, abortion and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). Analysis consisted of descriptive statistics and Chi square tests for differences between boys and girls.

**Results** The students mostly had experienced menarche (94%) or first spermatorrhea (83.6%). About 58.4% of students just knew little about process of puberty, fertilization, and contraception. Far more boys than girls considered that the effect of abortion on physical injury was harmless (30.4% and 9.6%,  $P < 0.001$ ). More than 60% of respondents knew the route of transmission of STDs well, but were poor understanding of adverse impact of STDs. The majority of the students did not consider sexual relationship acceptable at their age, a viewpoint that was more strongly held by girls (61.6%) than boys (45.1%) ( $P < 0.001$ ). Just 35.5% of boys would refuse when the lovers required to have a sex activity, far less than girls (76.1%) ( $P < 0.001$ ). The rate of sex intercourses among students was 5%, and a slightly higher proportion (46%) had never

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This study was supported by Science Popularization and Soft Science Program, Science and Technology Planning Project of Guangzhou City, China (No. 1515000221)

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*used contraception among those who had sexual activity. The demands of students on reproductive health were mainly on how to deal with the relationship with lovers (56.0%), knowledge on sexual health and menses (41.7%), sex moral knowledge (48.3%), contraception (45.0%), and preventive measures of STDs/acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) (47.0%).*

**Conclusion** *The reproductive health knowledge for the students was at very low level. There were some differences on the knowledge mastered by boys and girls while the sexual opinion of boys was more open than girls. It was urgent to carry out education among junior high school students to promote their reproductive health.*

**Key words:** adolescence; junior high school students; reproductive health

Reproductive health is defined as a state of physical, mental, and social well-being in all matters relating to the reproductive system, and not merely the absence of disease, at all stages of life<sup>[1]</sup>. Early adolescence can be considered as a special physiological “stage” in the life-course, which has been characterized as the changing transitions to adulthood<sup>[2]</sup>. Relative to the elderly, female teenagers under the age of 18 years are more likely to die of motherhood related diseases<sup>[3]</sup>. The reproductive system injuries of younger adolescents are most likely to result in the decline of fertility in adult or even infertility. Moreover, the injuries might sustain for one’s lifetime.

There is an increasing mortality rate caused by unwanted pregnancy, unsafe abortion and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) around the world<sup>[4]</sup>. More and more evidence of pre-marital sexual activity, risky sexual behaviours including non-use of condoms, multiple partners and casual sex experiences among teenagers was showed in China<sup>[5-7]</sup>. Many adolescents had experienced reproductive health problems due to low level of education and inadequate knowledge of reproductive health<sup>[8,9]</sup>. In recent years, human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) prevalence rate among adolescents had been climbing rapidly and reached alarming level<sup>[10]</sup>. Also, the acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) epidemic had been spreading mainly by sexually transmission, as rate was reaching 90%, which was more obvious among male homosexuality<sup>[10]</sup>.

The reproductive health of adolescents has been recognized as an important health concern and the focus of considerable global attention for many years<sup>[11-13]</sup>. But the reproductive health needs of adolescents are often poorly understood or neglected. It is deficient in reproductive health relevant courses among younger teenagers so far. Besides, little is known about reproductive health status and needs of junior high school students in China cities. Therefore, this study aimed to systematically explore reproductive health problems

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