Abstract

Objective: To compare peer education versus that imparted by health professionals for improving knowledge, risk perception and risky sexual behavior among teenagers attending to family planning clinics of two hospitals in Lima. Material and Methods: Experimental single-blind study carried out at the family planning clinics of Hospital Dos de Mayo and Instituto Materno Perinatal during the year 2000. After signing an informed consent, 206 teenagers considered as being at risk were randomly assigned to one of the two educational interventions and later they were requested to come back at the end of the third month in order to reassess knowledge, attitudes and risky sexual behavior. Sign rank, Mann Whitney and Analysis of Covariance tests were used to compare scores for knowledge, risk perception and sexual behavior after the educational intervention. Results: 89 (84%) out of 106 teenagers assigned to the peer education and 70 (70%) out of 100 teenagers assigned to the education provided by health professionals (p= 0,02). Improvement in the level of knowledge was significantly higher (p= 0,047) in group with peer education compared to the group trained by health professionals; however, significance decreased (p= 0,07) when analysis of covariance was used taking into account the scores for the first interview. Improvements in risk perception and sexual behavior were higher in the group with peer education, but the difference was not statistically significant. Conclusions: Peer education proved to be more effective in improving knowledge and the group undergoing this approach had better follow up rates, so peer education should be promoted as a strategy for decreasing the prevalence of sexually transmitted infections in this population.

Keywords

Teenagers; Education; Peer Groups; Sexually Transmitted Diseases; Family Planning Services. (source:BIREME).