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## Sexual Behaviour and Sexually Transmitted Infections Among Urban Ugandan Youths – Perceptions, Attitudes and Management

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### Abstract

The aims of this thesis were to expand the knowledge about sexual and reproductive health among urban Ugandan youths, living in a slum, and to evaluate the national flow-chart for management of the abnormal vaginal discharge (AVD) syndrome in adolescent girls. Data collection included individual interviews, focus group discussions and clinical investigations with tests for chlamydia trachomatis (CT), neisseria gonorrhoea (NG), trichomonas vaginalis (TV), syphilis, and HIV infection.

Poverty, peer pressure and gender power imbalance were obstacles to safe sexual practices: to abstain from sex, be faithful or to use condoms.

Prevalence among the 199 female and 107 male adolescents for CT, NG, TV, syphilis and HIV was 4.5%, 9.0%, 8.0%, 4.0% and 15.2% for females and 4.7%, 5.7%, 0%, 2.8% and 5.8% for males. The national AVD flow-chart had a sensitivity of 61%, a specificity of 38.5% and a positive predictive value (PPV) of 11.6%. A flow-chart using risk factors, rather than symptoms, implicated a sensitivity/specificity and PPV of 82.6%/47% and 17.3% respectively. Socially disadvantaged females had a high risk to be HIV infected and HIV infection was associated to other STIs. Females were more likely than males to have any of the infections studied.

Voluntary counselling and testing (VCT) for HIV was considered as helpful in preventing the spread of HIV. Obstacles for testing were: lack of time and money, fear of stigmatisation and fear that the knowledge of HIV positive status could shorten someone's life.

An alternative flow-chart for management of AVD among adolescent girls should be evaluated. Girl's opportunities for education and income generating work should be a priority. VCT services for young people should be made accessible in terms of cost, time and quality of counselling.

Key words: Adolescents, Uganda, syndromic approach, STI, VCT for HIV, Safe sex behaviour.