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EPI

Judging Dept.

Tarin Romich

Student

EPI/BIOSTAT

2

Glen D. Johnson, PhD

Dept or Program Years in program

Mentor

Adolescent Sexual Health Surveillance

Author (s)

Tarin Romich

Adolescent sexual health behavior is a critical public health issue that can easily change for better or worse. While there have been improvements such as decreasing teen pregnancy rates, there are also stubborn issues such as transmission of sexually transmitted diseases, which have not concurrently declined. With limited resources to target education, prevention and intervention, there is a demand for some community level surveillance across New York State (NYS) in order to assess community needs. A literature search was conducted to determine the measured and established indicators of adolescent sexual health. In addition, surveillance and epidemiologic data from independent health department programs on selected risk factors including sexually transmitted infections, HIV infection, teen pregnancy and birth rates was collected and summarized. The hope is that the information gained from the literature search will eventually be used in conjunction with data analyses to decide what determinants of adolescent sexual health will be included in a NYS adolescent sexual health report card. Subsequently, data provided by the New York State Department of Health Bureau of STD Control was used to produce a series of maps depicting sexually transmitted disease rates among adolescents. Rates of sexually transmitted disease are commonly used as indicators of adolescent sexual health. The resulting maps required the creation of data sets containing several variables from different sources, smoothing of the calculated rates, and the use of GIS software. The results of this data inquiry, challenges, and recommendations for future analysis will be presented.