

Period Poverty

“Period poverty” refers to the issue of girls and women being unable to afford menstrual products. This has led to girls missing school during their periods.

Following reports of Countdown Supermarkets cutting the price of its own range of products to help alleviate period poverty, a one-off forum was held in Wellington to discuss solutions, including representatives from KidsCan, Salvation Army and Countdown. Responses so far include donations of products for low decile schools. Alternative products such as menstrual cups and reusable pads have also been developed. These have environmental as well as economic benefits.

Last year Pharmac rejected a request to fund all women’s sanitary items, saying sanitary products were not medicine. There is now a government proposal under consideration to remove GST from female sanitary products.

Public health researcher Dr Sarah Donovan from the University of Otago has given numerous media interviews recently on the topic of period poverty, and also on the menstrual management needs of primary age girls not being provided for.

Long recognised as an issue for girls and women in developing countries, there is now evidence that with growing social inequality, economic barriers to satisfactory menstrual management do now exist in high income countries.

In the abstract for a 2017 presentation Sarah Donovan writes:

“This presentation argues that menstrual management should be recognised as a significant health equity issue in OECD countries, warranting further investigation of the extent to which access to menstrual management products and pain relief now varies considerably along socioeconomic lines.”

“Hidden burdens for women and girls: why is menstrual management not on the public health agenda in OECD countries?” 6th International Conference on Epidemiology & Public Health, October 2017, Paris, France.

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SEXUAL HEALTH NEWSLETTER
November 2018

Canterbury
District Health Board
Te Poari Hauora o Waitaha

Welcome to Community and Public Health's Sexual Health Newsletter. It provides up to date information to health co-ordinators in schools and others working in the area of sexual and youth health in the Canterbury / West Coast region. Any feedback is welcome.

Latest ERO Report - Promoting wellbeing through sexuality education

The Education Review Office has released a new report on sexuality education in New Zealand schools (the last one was in 2007). The evaluation found that overall, curriculum coverage remains inconsistent and there are significant gaps.

"Although biological aspects of sexuality and puberty are well-covered, more in depth coverage is needed for aspects like consent, digital technologies and relationships.

Sexual violence and pornography were covered in fewer than half the secondary schools ERO visited."

"Furthermore, the groups identified as being disadvantaged in the 2007 report remain less well catered for, despite being at higher risk of negative wellbeing outcomes".

These groups were Māori and Pacific students, international students, students with strong cultural or religious beliefs, students with additional learning needs and students who were sex, gender or sexuality diverse.

The report also showcases the practices of a group of schools effectively meeting the challenges of our current context.

"Crucially, leaders and teachers in these schools paid attention to the voices of their communities, and especially their students, around what they knew, and what they wanted to learn more about."

"Leaders, trustees and teachers in these schools recognised there were diverse views within their communities about sexuality education, but found most parents and whānau were supportive of comprehensive sexuality education once they were fully consulted and informed."

"Additionally, leaders in these schools had established an environment of collective responsibility for inclusion that meant sex, gender and sexuality diverse students got consistent messages around belonging, and were more able to feel safe and accepted at school."

To read the full report go to: www.ero.govt.nz/publications/category/national-evaluations

The Light Project

The Light Project aims to equip young people, their whānau and communities to positively navigate the new porn landscape. It is now very easy for young people to access online pornography on mobile devices, often from a very young age, and pornography has been linked with unrealistic attitudes about sex and harmful ideas about relationships.

The Light Project was established in New Zealand in 2017. It undertook a Youth Stakeholder Survey to assess whether stakeholders thought porn was an issue for young people based on their experiences, and to identify stakeholder knowledge gaps and resource / training needs.

Stakeholders included: sexual health care providers and youth organisations, whānau and caregivers, schools, faith-based organisations, and therapists.

The findings suggest the majority (94%) of stakeholders thought porn was an issue for young people in Aotearoa. Most stakeholders (71%) are already engaging in conversations about porn with young people in their workplace, but of these, many (59%) feel unequipped, reporting a lack of porn knowledge and resources.

For a copy of the survey report "Porn and Young People – What Do We Know?" email hello@thelightproject.co.nz. You can find resources to equip young people, whānau and those who work alongside youth at www.thelightproject.co.nz

Sexual Health Seminar on Thursday 15 November at CPH

The final Sexual Health Seminar for 2018 will run on Thursday 15 November at Community and Public Health from 1pm to 4.30pm. There will be a networking round from 1-2pm followed by two speakers. Sandy Hamilton, a nurse at Family Planning Christchurch, will give an update on contraception. Victoria Riddiford will speak about the current strategies of the New Zealand AIDS Foundation. Victoria is National Therapeutic Leader and Team Leader Christchurch for NZAF. The seminars are free and open to anyone interested to attend. Afternoon tea will be served. You can attend any part of the programme.

IUSTI Asia Pacific Sexual Health Congress

IUSTI will be held 1-3 November 2018 in Auckland. It is a joint meeting between the International Union for Sexually Transmitted Infections – Asia Pacific, the NZ Sexual Health Society and the Australasian Sexual Health Alliance.

The theme is "He Muka No Te Taura Whiri, "Many Strands Make One Rope." The Congress is focusing on bringing together the many strands of sexual health in order to provide stability and strength to the sexual health workforce and strengthening bonds between specialists, GPs, nurses, researchers, health promoters, educators and others working in the area. To find out more go to www.iustiap18.com