

Abstract

Sexuality is a recognized human right as it influences mental, social and emotional wellbeing. Despite this, individuals with intellectual or developmentally delays (ID/DD) rarely receive the necessary sexual education. ID/DD persons are also at an increased risk for sexual abuse, further demonstrating the strong need for education. A natural setting in which to receive unbiased and informative sexual health information is through their medical provider. The purpose of this research was to examine current clinic standards, education, and perceptions of medical providers in regards to sexual education for ID/DD adolescents. Medical providers and students within West Michigan were surveyed with follow up intensive ethnographic interviews conducted. Themes developed from interviews and additional quantitative data demonstrated that medical providers view sexual education for ID/DD persons. However, doctors and advanced practice practitioners note barriers to teaching in time, comfort level, and knowledge. Further research on medical providers teaching sexual education to ID/DD persons is necessary. Recommended next steps for providing this teaching to ID/DD persons involve the development of resources for medical providers along with consistent formal training in medical institutions.