KNOWLEDGE OF SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES AND 
ATTITUDES TOWARDS CONDOM USE AMONG “AT RISK” 
ADOLESCENTS IN SWAZILAND

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ABSTRACT
The purpose of this descriptive study was to determine adolescents’ knowledge about sexually transmitted diseases, HIV/AIDS and attitudes towards condom use. The study population consisted of 163 adolescents aged 13-19 years. Forty-six were attending antenatal care, 27 had come for family planning services and 90 were seeking treatment for sexually transmitted diseases. Quantitative and qualitative research approaches were used with data collected through face-to-face interviews. Findings revealed that although adolescents knew about sexually transmitted diseases, they did not practice safe sex. Knowledge of STDs was higher among adolescents resident in urban areas than those in rural settings (p<0.05). Self reported STDs included syphilis, gonorrhea, chancroid, genital warts and pelvic inflammatory diseases. Condom use was not associated with prevention of STDs, but was viewed as a protective measure against pregnancy demonstrating that knowledge cannot be translated into action and behaviour change without modification of attitudes and beliefs. Reasons cited for not using the condom reflected a negative attitude towards its use. Findings also revealed that peer pressure and social norms are powerful determinants of behavioural change. In order to control STD/HIV/AIDS it is important that educational programmes encourage adolescents to maintain safe sexual practice mainly condom use.

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