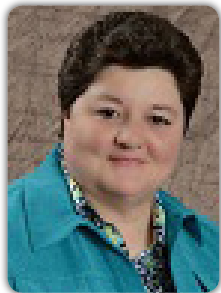


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Dianne L Kerr

Kent State University, USA

A comparison of lesbian, bisexual and heterosexual college women on reproductive health screenings and sexual behaviors

Statement of the Problem: Little is known about sexual minority college women regarding reproductive health screenings and sexual risk behaviors. Research that has been conducted often combines LGBT individuals into one group for analysis, which may mask the variance between these groups. The Institute of Medicine has recognized the need to separate groups from the LGBT spectrum in order to more accurately reflect differences. The purpose of this study was to compare lesbian, bisexual, and heterosexual college undergraduate women on reproductive health screening behaviors and to determine associations between screening, number of sexual partners, types of sexual intercourse, condom/protective barrier use, and demographic variables.

Methodology & Theoretical Orientation: The study utilized a pre-existing data set, from the American College Health Association's National College Health Assessment. The theoretical orientation was minority stress theory, indicating lesbian and bisexual women would be more at risk for health debilitating behaviors due to minority stress.

Findings: Bisexual college women participated more in screenings and were more likely to participate in anal sex than heterosexual women or lesbians. Bisexuals were less likely to use condoms/protective barriers for vaginal and anal sex in the last 30 days than heterosexuals. Most of the sample used no barrier protection for oral sex. Lesbians were less likely to have gynecological exams than bisexual and heterosexual women and to be tested for HIV than bisexual women. Bivariate tests found significant associations between sexual orientation and each of the preventive screenings. The number of sexual partners was a significant predictor for all screening tests with those having more partners screening more frequently.

Conclusions & Significance: Health center personnel should attend to the unique needs of each sexual minority group, particularly bisexual women who appear to be at higher risk than lesbian or heterosexual women.

Biography

Dianne L Kerr is a Professor of health education and promotion in the School of Health Sciences at Kent State University with a specialization in HIV education and sexual health. Her passion is advocating for the health of LGBTQ individuals. This began with work at the American School Health Association as AIDS Education Project Director in some of the most critical years of the AIDS epidemic. She has conducted numerous workshops and presentations on LGBT bullying and transgender health. She is currently a Provost's Faculty Associate for diversity equity and inclusion working on policies to benefit LGBTQ students, faculty and staff at the university. She has over 60 publications and has conducted hundreds of presentations. She has won several state and national awards for her work with under-represented populations.

dkerr@kent.edu