

Female College Student's Knowledge, Perceptions and Awareness of Menstrual Health: A Survey Study

Ana F Tomlinson, MS, BS; Garrett Forman, BS; Sierra Stiff; Lisa Gwynn, DO, MBA

Background

Period poverty refers to the lack of access to menstrual hygiene tools and/or education. Many U.S. college students struggle to afford period products¹. The state of menstrual health education access in this population is not well understood.

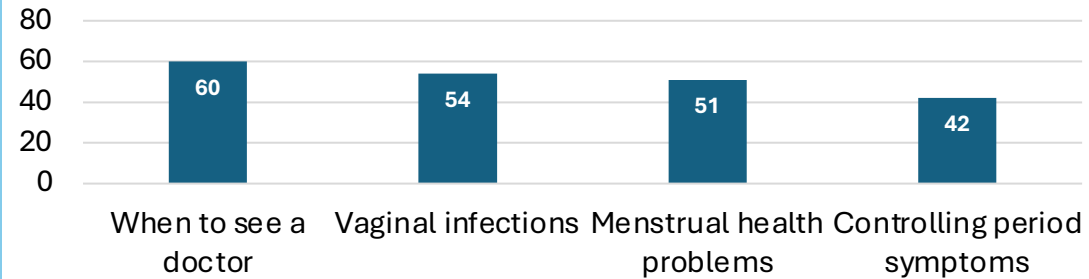
Scan QR for references.



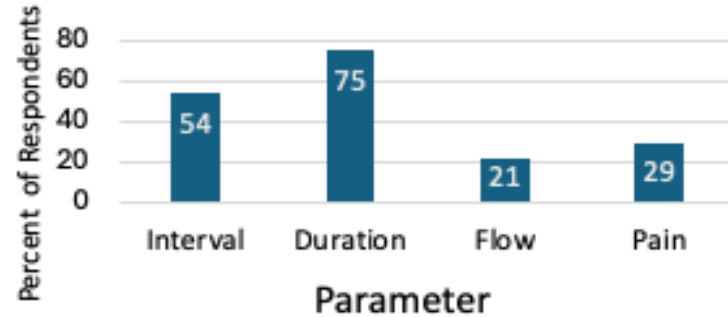
Results

102 surveys of participants from 9 different states were analyzed. The mean age was 19.6.

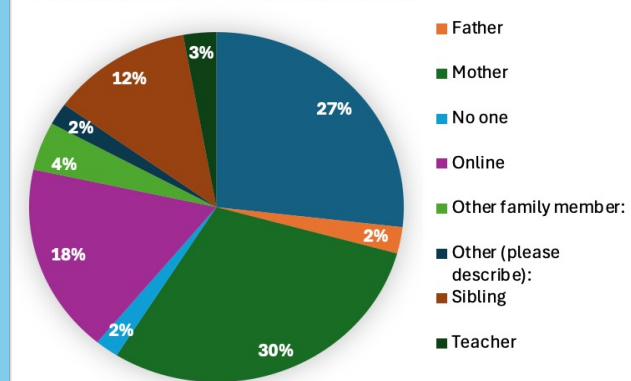
Menstrual and Reproductive Health Topics of Interest



Percent Correctly Identifying Normal Menstruation Parameters



Preferred Source for Menstrual Guidance



Objective

We hypothesized that menstrual health knowledge is insufficient in female college students despite access to higher education. The goal of this study is to gain better understanding of female college student's ability to identify normal vs. abnormal menses, experiences and perspectives with seeking help for menstrual problems, and preferences for menstrual health education delivery.

Of 70 participants with history of abnormal menses, only 34% sought medical attention. 79% sought help from their mother, 12.9% online, and 11.4% did not seek help. Satisfaction was higher from those who sought help from a doctor/nurse ($p=0.02$) or their mother ($p<0.001$) and lower from those who sought guidance online ($p=0.014$) or from no one ($p<0.001$).

Of 24 participants who did not endorse abnormal menses, 4 had prolonged menses and 9 had abnormal cycle intervals.

Methods

The survey was designed on Qualtrics. Inclusion criteria were college students who menstruate between ages 18-28. The survey was distributed using snowballing. Statistical analysis was performed using SLSS.

Conclusion

ACOG's committee views the menstrual cycle as a vital health indicator for adolescents, as irregularities may signal conditions needing medical interventions². This study's findings, including identified knowledge gaps, topics of high interest, and preferred sources for guidance on menstrual health issues, may help guide future initiatives targeting period poverty in the United States.