

Public health concerns

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Pregnancy would ideally be a time of happiness and fulfillment, but for many people it is not. During the nine months that a woman is pregnant she and her unborn child face many health concerns, many of which could be prevented with proper prenatal care (World Health Organization, 2012) Over the past three months that I have been working as a labor nurse I have noticed that in my community there is an overwhelming amount of women who have had little or no prenatal care. The lack of prenatal care can cause numerous problems such as preterm labor and low birth weight. There are many things that we could do as a community to help combat this problem one of the most obvious to me would be to educate the community as much as possible and I think one of the easiest ways to do that is to produce a television and radio commercial that talks about the importance and availability of prenatal care in the community. Another way we could help is to pass out prenatal vitamins in public settings. The March of Dimes has a program designed for this and will provide the vitamins at little to no cost. Often times when I have been at the grocery store I have seen public health nurses with a table set up to do vaccinations, so why not try it with free vitamins as well. Another easy and effective way to promote prenatal care is to put up signage in public areas such as colleges and Doctors offices that could list the key benefits of good prenatal care. The next concern I have is the sheer volume of teenagers that are engaging in unprotected intercourse and contracting some form of sexually transmitted infection (STI). Estimates suggest that even though young people aged 15—24 years represent only 25% of the sexually experienced population, they acquire nearly half of all

new STDs (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2011). I worked in a title ten funded facility for six years and it was nothing for us to see eight to ten new cases of STI's a week, which is not counting the people who just were not coming in to be treated. Almost all of these cases were teenagers. After counseling and teaching these teenagers I realized that most had no idea about the risks they were taking. So my solution to this, and some of you will not like it, is to educate these kids in school about the risks involved with being sexually active. Their needs to be a class that has real up to date information and it should be taught by someone such as me who has worked in this field and has an understanding of how to talk with these kids on a level that they will understand and respect. It seems that most kids are just worried about teen pregnancy, but in these instances pregnancy would be the better outcome for some. If you think about it most people are not going to die from being pregnant but they will die of AIDS related illnesses if they contract HIV. So what is the harm in educating them about what most likely will happen? My next solution is not usually a popular one either. We need to make condoms more readily available to our teens. There needs to be a program designed to provide free condoms to teens in a discreet manner. If there is one thing I will never understand is why it is so embarrassing for a person who is having sex to ask for or buy condoms. Not to mention, condoms are the only protection from STI's aside from abstinence. And let's face it; teens are going to do what they want, one way or the other. The final intervention I feel would merit thought is a class for parents. So many parents are just as uncomfortable talking to their kids as their kids are of talking to them. If we could educate our parents effectively maybe they will

have the proper knowledge to be able to communicate effectively to their teen. There are many teens who want to do the right thing but they just do not have the correct information or resources' to make that decision. I know it is hard to think about these topics and often times it stirs much controversy. However, in the real world worrying about the social stigma associated with such topics is pointless. Teens are going to have sex and no matter how much we do not want that to happen it does and often times we cannot stop it. So what is the problem with making it safer and teaching our children why we do not want them to do it. Historically the more we as parents tell them no, the more they want to do it. Instead of no, we need to say why. References Centers for Disease Control and Preventionl. (2011). STD's in adolescents and youg adults. Retrieved from <http://www.cdc.gov/std/stats10/adol.htm>. World Health Organization. (2012). Pregnancy. Retrieved from <http://www.who.int/topics/pregnancy/en>.