

Reviewer's report

Title: Age differences at sexual debut and subsequent reproductive health: Is there a link?

Version: 1 **Date:** 24 April 2008

Reviewer: Sharon T Cameron

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Age Differences at sexual debut and subsequent reproductive health: is there a link? Gomez et al

Question posed:

The paper is original in that it examines aspects of current reproductive health in the light of partner's age difference at first sexual experience.

Scientific Merit:

A few comments/queries:

1. Background – the background is lengthy and could be shortened.
2. Methods- subjects were interviewed, but the nature of whether this was in-depth interviews or structured interviews, should be clarified. Who conducted the interviews is not know? Field researcher? Doctor at clinic? A referral to the previous publication ref 26 for more information on methodology, is not sufficient for the reader to understand how the study was conducted.
3. Methods –this section should confirm if consent to participate was taken and if so how- written or verbal.
4. Results – the mean age of women at first sexual intercourse would be interesting, rather than just the proportion who commenced before 18 years.
5. Results- page 7, line 17- ‘ ..14% with partners 10yrs or older..’ authors should state in text that this was not significant.
6. Discussion- page 9, 3rd para- the authors link non- use of condoms at last intercourse with imbalance in power. The theory should more correctly be ‘no method’ since condoms may not be used because a more effective hormonal method is used. They should more correctly try to examine the relation between ‘no method’ and age differential at sexual debut. Alternatively they could examine non-use of condoms in the context of protection against STI's , in which case they should limit their conclusions to this.
7. Tables 1, 2- presumably columns 2 onwards display percentage results. It would be valuable (and standard practice) to give the exact number followed by the percentage in brackets, and to state this clearly in table heading.

Clinical Importance

Studies on aspects of sexual and reproductive health and age at sexual debut, or

age of partners are extremely important in helping to understand if or how health is affected by this, and thus how best to develop strategies that could prevent this.

Major Compulsory revisions-I feel that an important revision is to examine between 'no method' and age differential at sexual debut, if they wish to draw conclusions on ability to negotiate contraception in later life. Alternatively they may wish to examine non-use of condom in the context of protection against STI.

Minor essential revisions- I feel that the authors should undertake minor amendments of methodology, results and tables as detailed in my report.

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests