

Study identifies why some young people choose to get tested for STDs and others don't

January 27 2012, By Joe Diorio

(Medical Xpress) -- A recent study by researchers from the University of Pennsylvania and the University of Maryland identified the reasons why college-age individuals would be tested for sexually transmitted diseases. These findings are valuable in developing public health awareness advertising campaigns.

Researchers Ryan S. Paquin, a doctoral candidate from the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Pennsylvania, and Vanessa Boudewyns from the University of Maryland offer new answers about why young people choose to be tested or opt against it. The study of 341 undergraduate students ranging in ages from 18 to 28 consisted of an online questionnaire intended to uncover the beliefs that underlie the decision to be tested for STDs. Their findings, published in *Health Communication*, suggest that those who intended to be tested for STDs were motivated by two main factors: they saw it as a sign of respect for their sexual partners and would prevent them from spreading STDs to others.

Interestingly, the people who did not intend to be tested valued those two factors the same as those who did intend to be tested. This suggests that when considering messages for an STD awareness campaign, [public health](#) officials may want to make a link between testing and these benefits.

With one in two sexually active young adults contracting a sexually transmitted [disease](#) before the age of 25, public [health officials](#) are increasingly concerned about the spread of STDs and are eager to find ways to reduce rates of infections. Although there have been a number of public outreach programs promoting behaviors that help prevent STDs (like condom use) there has been less attention on testing, which could also help reduce the spread of STDs.

Among those who did not intend to be tested, the two biggest disadvantages reported were that others might draw conclusions about their sex life and embarrassment. Again, this insight offers important information to public health officials looking at ways to form effective communications. In this case, the research suggests that developing public service announcements or communications that address embarrassment directly may be quite effective.

More information: A copy of the article, “Intentions and Beliefs About Getting Tested for STDs: Implications for Communication Interventions” can be obtained by contacting the [Annenberg School for Communication](#).

Provided by University of Pennsylvania

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