Video Game May Improve Sexual Health Knowledge Among Teens

September 19, 2017

Many adolescents are affected by HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) but lack information about sexual health. Now, findings published in the Journal of Medical Internet Research suggest that a role-playing intervention video game generates healthy attitudes about sex and a better understanding of sexual health among minority youth, reports Yale News.

For the one-year study, researchers from Yale University enrolled more than 300 students ages 11 to 14 from after-school and summer programs in the New Haven area to play video games. Scientists split participants into two groups: those who played the intervention game PlayForward: Elm City Stories versus those who played one of several unrelated games. (Games were played for up to 75 minutes twice each week.) Afterward, researchers assessed the adolescents' attitudes toward sex, comprehension of sexual health, information, intention to initiate sex and sexual activity.

At the end of the year, results showed that PlayForward users showed improvement in their outlook on sex and a better grasp of sexual health issues compared with teens who played the nonintervention games. (For example, PlayForward gamers were more likely to respond that a girl could get pregnant after the first time she had sex.) However, the intention of individuals in both groups to initiate sex or be sexually active was the same.

"It was proof of concept," said Lynn Fiellin, MD, an associate professor of medicine at Yale School of Medicine and in the Child Study Center and one of the study's authors. "To our knowledge, never before has a video game intervention been developed with such extensive input from its target audience and tested through rigorous scientific methods over a long stretch of time, demonstrating that kids will engage in a game with serious content and learn things that impact the way they think and potentially what they do."

As a result of these findings, researchers secured more funding to perfect the content of PlayForward. The goal of the modified game will be to stop young people from smoking or using electronic cigarettes, as well as motivate them to get tested for HIV and other STIs.

Click here to learn how video games can help treat depression.

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.
http://beta.docker.realhealthmag.com/article/video-game-may-improve-sexual-health-knowledge-among-teens