Lesbian Women and Knowledge About Human Papillomavirus

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Research on lesbian health care is scarce, and a paucity of data exists regarding lesbians’ increased health risks. Lesbians and their heterosexual counterparts have health differences, but how they influence risk for subsequent disease is not known. The general public perceives that some sexually transmitted diseases do not affect the lesbian community, that such diseases affect only heterosexual and gay sexual contacts. The purpose of this pilot study was twofold: to explore the association between lesbians’ knowledge of human papillomavirus (HPV) cancer risk with age, education, and openness with a woman’s healthcare provider; and to explore the relationship between lesbians’ knowledge of female-to-female HPV transmission with age, education, and openness with one’s physician.

Literature Review

Many reasons exist for the lack of research on lesbian health. One reason is that homosexuality is stigmatized; therefore, identifying this subpopulation of women to survey them about their healthcare practices is difficult. In the 2000 U.S. census, the most comprehensive sample of same-sex couples was collected, reflecting a change in polling questions allowing gay and lesbian couples to identify themselves clearly to demographers (Simmons & O’Connell, 2003). The census queried gender...