

## INFLUENCE OF YOUNG WOMEN'S HEALTH LITERACY ON KNOWLEDGE ABOUT REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES

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**Background:** The most searched topics in younger population are focused on reproductive and sexual health. Sexual health is crucial for physical and mental health and overall well-being, and it is fundamental in the prevention of unwanted pregnancy and STDs among adolescents. The aim of this study is to assess the influence of health literacy on knowledge about reproductive health and sexually transmitted diseases in younger woman in Serbia.

**Methods and Objectives:** This research was conducted as observational, cross-section study. We used STOFHLA to assess the health literacy level of young people and General information questionnaire for demographic, social and economic characteristics of respondents, health knowledge and behaviour in the area of reproductive health. Chi square test was performed to assess the existence of correlation between categorical variables using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), version 23.

**Results:** Our research was conducted on 233 young females, with median age of 21.2±2.25. 97% of respondents had adequate level of literacy and 3% had marginal level. Opinion of woman respondents was that the most common STD were chlamydia and HPV, more than a half did not know about the existence of HPV vaccine (67%), but 82% did know about hepatitis B vaccine. Half of them thought that HPV only can be transmitted by sexual contact, with most common symptoms itching and increased secret production. Results of our research found significant connection between levels of health literacy and knowledge about HPV vaccination ( $p = 0.051$ ) and the way of HPV transmissions ( $p = 0.041$ ).

**Conclusions:** The importance of this research is reflected in its contribution to a clearer understanding of the impact of health literacy and on the reproductive health of young women in Serbia, with the aim of using this information to improve public policies, health interventions and educational programs.

**Keywords:** health literacy, reproductive health, STDs, young women, Serbia