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Reproductive Health (Sexual and Reproductive Health) Care for Adolescent Girls in Children's Homes in Iwate Prefecture

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Applicable principle

Principle 8: A commitment to addressing issues of poverty through education

Principle 9: A commitment to promoting sustainability through education

1. Activity Overview

Girls in children's homes live in an environment where it is difficult for them to receive wisdom about reproductive health (sexual and reproductive health) from their mothers. In addition, those girls tend to have psychosocial problems rooted in attachment disorders, such as low self-esteem and an inability to trust others, and they tend to become sexually active earlier than girls of the same age, which exposes them to a higher risk of unexpected pregnancies, contracting sexually transmitted diseases and sexual violence. On the other hand, currently, the handling of sexual problems and reproductive health issues in children's homes is left to the homes and due to lack of specialized knowledge and skills as well as the embarrassment of the staff members of the homes, cooperation with medical professionals is necessary.

In order to respond to this problem, at the Faculty of Nursing, Iwate Prefectural University, we have developed and put into practice a reproductive health care model for adolescent girls living in children's homes in Iwate Prefecture from the standpoint of experts in nursing and midwifery. This care model is based on interactions that consider the characteristics of girls who have experienced abuse, etc., and aims to not only provide knowledge, but to also encourage them to accept themselves as well as their sexuality, so that they will be able to acquire sexual autonomy in the future.



Girls can pick up sanitary napkins and shorts, and feel the body using a model.

2. Activities

For the reproductive health care activity, we have small group talk sessions of 5 to 6 people and individual continuous care for those who are interested. The topics cover the structure of body and the mechanisms of menstruation, the specific

method of menstrual care which is communicated by mothers in an ordinary household, how to bathe and how to wash underwear during menstruation, how to deal with menstrual pain, as well as the mechanisms of pregnancy and contraception. We are careful not to make the session a one-way inculcation of knowledge, and we flexibly decide topics according to individual needs and situations based on mutual relationships with girls. Using hand-made teaching materials such as "My body notebook" and "XX's menstrual calendar", as well as actual sanitary napkins and birth-control devices and models, we make efforts so that students can visualise and experience topics with their own bodies.

Also, our care has been based on the consideration for girls who have experienced abuse, etc. so that such girls can feel safety and security. Touching and skin-to-skin contact such as stroking and rubbing with hands and fingers, was incorporated so that the girls could feel their own body and existence. At the care session, we place hands on girl's abdomens, telling them, "You are a precious person, so please take care of here (uterus)", or offered affirming statements such as "You know, your body is important, important" while slowly rubbing their shoulders and arms. A girl who used to say, "I am nothing" or "I don't care about myself" now listens intently while thinking about something, and touches her own body and says, "It's important". After the care session, we found girls' comments stating, "I could feel my own body", "I want to participate the session again", and "I want to take care of myself".

It is suggested that reproductive health care that considers the characteristics of adolescent girls in children's homes enables them to realize their own bodies and sexuality, and it leads to them regaining the "basic sense of self (Herman 1992)" that has been weakened by experiences such as abuse.

We plan to continue this initiative in cooperation with children's homes.



Some of hand-made teaching materials