

## INTRODUCTION

Adolescents represent a significant age group of the population. In fact, adolescence is a period of profound changes that take place not only physically and socially but also psychologically (*WHO, 2000*). During this period, the adolescent becomes prone to different behavioral orientations and is influenced by a multitude of demographic, economic, religious, educational and technological factors. This transitional situation makes adolescent girls more vulnerable to contracting certain behavioral diseases such as sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) (*Bonny and Biro, 2001*).

Adolescents are often sexually active, a reality that parents, doctors, and adolescents themselves are not always comfortable addressing. A practitioner approaches the topic of teenage sexuality by focusing slowly on possible outcomes related to the sexual act itself. In fact, sexual behavior does not start during adolescence or adulthood, but with childhood sexual curiosity. During adolescence, there is a sudden upsurge of curiosity and interest in one's own body and the bodies of one's peers. Even very young adolescents are interested in "how things work" and are exposed to a wide range of sexual topics through friends, school, and the media (*Neinstein and Lawrence, 2003*).

Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) remain a public health problem of major significance in most parts of the world. The incidence of acute STDs is believed to be high in many countries and failure to diagnose and treat STDs at an early stage may result in serious complications and sequelae, including infertility, fetal wastage, ectopic pregnancy, and premature death, as well as neonatal and infant infections (*WHO, 2001*).

Stigma and embarrassment associated with STDs can delay seeking help for treatment. Adolescent girls often have difficulty complying with treatment because it may be lengthy, painful and sometimes they need to conceal medications so that the STDs is not revealed (*Feroli et al., 2004*).

Sexually transmitted disease management is the care of a person with a STD-related syndrome or with a positive test for one or more STDs. Successful management of STDs requires that staff are respectful of patients and are not judgmental. Examination must be done in appropriate surroundings where privacy can be ensured and confidentiality guaranteed. When dealing with adolescents, the health care provider should be experienced and conversant with the changes in anatomy and physiology associated with the different maturation stages, e.g., the menarche in young girls. In some situations, health care workers require training to overcome their own sensitivities and be able to address the issue of sexuality and STDs in an open and constructive manner (*WHO, 2001*).

Perception is mental process by which the nature of an object is recognized through the association of a memory of its other qualities with the special senses, bringing it up at the time of consciousness. It is a complex act of transferring physical stimulation into psychological information. It includes four aspects: reception, registration, processing, and feedback, (*Campbell, 2002; Stuart and Lauria, 2005*).

Nurses can play an important role in minimizing the adolescent's delay in seeking treatment by understanding the underlying reasons for delay through planning routine screening for individuals at higher risk and educating the adolescent girls on taking certain precautionary

measures for reducing the risk of acquiring STDs. These measures include having regular checkup, maintaining personal hygiene, and avoiding early marriage (*Erken and Desiderios, 2004*). Also, the nurse can help adolescent girls to understand the treatment plan of STDs through providing accurate information about prevention, transmission and treatment of STDs (*Black and Hawks, 2002*).

Countries in the region have started to adopt WHO recommended policies and practice on STD prevention and care ,and are gradually shifting coercive and punitive approaches to more user – friendly services . these changes are slow and have not been implemented on large enough scale to result in a major reduction in the transmission of syphilis or other STD. There is an urgent need for further reform of the STI prevention and care system . this requires a stronger and continuing commitment from governments and international organizations providing assistance (WHO,2008).

therefore to do this role the nurses have to recognize the background information adolescent girls have about sexually transmitted infections, so they can deal with them and understand their thoughts. On this basis, the aim of the current study was to recognize the perception of adolescent girls regarding sexually transmitted diseases.