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## NEWS ROUNDUP

**China blocks access to sex education websites**

China’s government plans to tighten restrictions on websites that discuss sexual health as part of broader regulations. The Ministry of Health says the rules are aimed at improving the accuracy and scientific basis of all medical health sites on the Internet. The guidelines, which apply to topics including “sexual psychology, sexual ethics, sex medicine, and sex treatments”, state that only government-sanctioned medical institutions can provide sex-related content on websites, and that all such sites will have to be approved by provincial-level health authorities. Sex is a taboo subject in China, but rising incomes and increasing freedom of choice for how people behave have created more interest in sexual issues and in reproductive education. Many experts say education on the subject remains inadequate. Liang Peiding, who runs a site that offers information on issues such as sexual dysfunction and medicine, believes the health ministry shouldn’t have the jurisdiction to monitor online content. Under the new restrictions, sex-related sites must use material only from specialists in the field. Violators can be fined up to 30 000 yuan (about US\$4400).

Source: *The Wall Street Journal*, 26 June 2009

**USA birth rate mirrors recession**

The prospect of a ‘baby-bust’ with the current global recession mirrors the recessions of the 1930s and 1980s. Recent data from the USA census shows a strong slowdown in the birth rate that began in advance of the economic crisis. The figures have given rise to speculation that families anticipated hard times by having fewer children.

“If prospects look worse for families, they’re going to be very likely to have fewer kids”, said Mark Mather of the Population Research Bureau. The National Center for Health Statistics, which compiled the figures, said that it was too early to be sure why there were fewer pregnancies, but cited the economic slowdown and high house prices.

Source: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/business/8057326.stm>

**Study stopped due to increased teen pregnancy rate**

A multi-million pound project aimed at improving health outcomes in teenagers has been cancelled after initial reports showed that it was not reducing teenage pregnancy rates. The intervention group ( $n = 2724$ ) aged 13–15 years at baseline deemed by professionals as at risk of

teenage pregnancy, substance misuse, or school exclusion or to be vulnerable were offered support and advice from the Young People’s Development Project. The prospective matched comparison study was to evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention in terms of drug and alcohol use and teenage conception rates. The team from University College London report that the intervention group had higher rates of teenage pregnancy than the comparison group.<sup>1</sup>

**Reference**

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**Face of Global Sex Report**

Durex have published a report entitled *Sex and Relationships Education: Assessing the Gaps for Eastern European Youth*, that examines which variables are most likely to influence the perceived need for further sex and relationships education among 14–22-year-olds in Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Serbia and Slovakia.

The study shows that regardless of their nationality, the younger a person is when they initially receive sex and relationships education, the less likely it is that they will feel the need for further sex education at later stages in their lives, particularly if the education is delivered by school teachers or health care professionals. The report concludes that preventative programmes in Eastern Europe should be formalised with universal access to children under the age of 12 years.

Source: <http://www.durexnetwork.org/en-GB/research/faceofglobalsex/Pages/Home.aspx>

**Parents happy for teenage children to carry contraception**

A poll commissioned as part of the government’s ‘Time to Talk’ campaign has shown that parents are no longer concerned about their children carrying contraception, with a fifth saying they have bought condoms to keep at home. The poll of more than 1000 people found that parents are no longer prudish about talking about sex. Just 4% of parents questioned said they would be anxious if they discovered their teenager, aged 16–19 years, was carrying contraception, with nine in ten saying they would want to talk to them about it. In addition, almost a quarter of parents (24%) reported making an appointment with their local GP for their teenager to talk through the different types of contraception.

Source: *The Scotsman*, 15 June 2009

**Maternal BV and vitamin D levels**

Bacterial vaginosis (BV) is widespread and is associated with adverse pregnancy outcomes. A study investigating possible links with vitamin D status in pregnancy and BV in the first trimester of pregnancy found that BV declined as vitamin D levels rose, reaching a plateau at vitamin D levels of 80 nmol/l. Vitamin D deficiency is associated with BV, possibly via the immune system.<sup>1</sup> Vitamin D deficiency is associated with BV and may contribute to the strong racial disparity in the prevalence of BV.

**Reference**

- 1 Bodnar LM, Krohn MA, Simhan HN. Maternal vitamin D deficiency is associated with bacterial vaginosis in the first trimester of pregnancy. *J Nutr* 2009; **139**: 1157–1161.

**VF educational microsite**

The first interactive educational microsite for fertility and reproductive specialists has been launched at CookARTLab.com. Sponsored by Cook Medical, the site includes a video tour of an assisted reproductive technology (ART) laboratory – guiding the user through the whole *in vitro* fertilisation (IVF) process from ovum collection to embryo transfer. It also includes a knowledge base, discussion forum and news centre, all of which give ART specialists the opportunity to exchange knowledge and experience all in one place. This site gives an introduction into the processes involved in IVF and embryo transfer, which is of use for clinicians who need to discuss techniques with patients or who are planning to work in an IVF unit.

Source: <http://CookARTLab.com>

**Men having unprotected sex on ‘male pill’**

A survey of 2000 people suggests that 64% of men would be more likely to have sex without a condom if they had taken the new male contraceptive injection. The survey also showed that over two-thirds of the men believed that they would have the new contraceptive injection. This rises amongst older men, with three-quarters of those over the age of 34 years likely to have the injection. Meanwhile, three in four women said they would not trust men to use the new contraceptive – and this lack of faith increases as women get older, with younger women more inclined to trust men on this issue.

Source: [www.hall-and-partners.com](http://www.hall-and-partners.com)

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