

Galea, J., Butler, J., & Iacono, T. (2004). The assessment of sexual knowledge in people with intellectual disability. *Journal of Intellectual & Developmental Disability, 29 (4), 350 – 365.*

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This paper is the result of an Australian research project on the pertinence of a tool to measure sexual understanding in people with disabilities. The tool in question is called *Assessment of Sexual Knowledge (ASK)*. It takes the form of a questionnaire designed for use on people with an intellectual disability.

The questionnaire deal with several issues (15) specifically relating to the body, relationships and sexual behaviour. Each interviewee was attributed a score based on the validity of his response. The aim was to gauge the level of knowledge rather than describe personal behaviour. Readers will find more information on ASK in the following document: Butler, J., Leighton, D., & Galea, J. (2003). *The Assessment of Sexual Knowledge*. Melbourne: Centre for Developmental Disability Health Victoria.

METHOD

ASK questionnaires were given to 96 people (54 men and 42 women) with intellectual disabilities, aged between 18 and 57 (the mean age was 31 to 32 years old). Personal information on participants (nationality, place of birth) was given by professional carers. Participants were from Melbourne (Australia); around half of them lived with their families, and around 40% lived in residential care.

According to the authors, each person questioned was able to respond his/herself to the questions. They were « recruited » by professional carers who either work with them or for organisations that know them. The agreement of these intermediaries was necessary before filling out the questionnaire. The responses to the questionnaire were confidential.

RESULTS

The results show gaps in knowledge of sexuality in people with intellectual disabilities. These gaps are considered to be significant on the question of puberty, menstruation, sexually

transmitted diseases, contraception and legal issues. These results led the authors to consider that people with intellectual disabilities are being inappropriately taught.

RECOMMENDATIONS

According to the authors, the ASK tool could be useful for educators (working with people with intellectual disabilities), in order to evaluate and develop teaching content for sex education programmes.

This document stems from a project by the Centre Ressources and its partners: the CeRHes (Centre Ressources Handicaps et Sexualités), CH(s)OSE (Collectif Handicap et Sexualité OSE), CCAH (Comité National Coordination Action Handicap). It was written by Aurélien Berthou (doctoral student in sociology at the CERLIS, Centre de recherches sur les liens sociaux).