

Availability of and Access to Health and HIV/ AIDS Prevention Services for Youths in Rural Secondary Schools in South Africa

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KEYWORDS Accessibility. Health Facilities. Services Utilisation. Youths

ABSTRACT The study assessed the accessibility and availability of health and HIV prevention services for rural secondary learners in Malelane Sub-district of South Africa. A cross-sectional descriptive survey design was adopted. Self-report questionnaires were used to collect data from a total of 242 randomly selected learners aged 15 to 22 years yielding 69.1 percent response rate. On the question of access to health facilities, 93.7 percent and 85.5 percent reported accessing the clinic and the hospital respectively. Whilst almost 3 in 4 respondents reported receiving HIV information, only a quarter took part in the HIV/AIDS awareness programme. Though most (98.3%) of the respondents in the study reported being aware of the availability of free condoms, 57.1 percent indicated that they were too scared or afraid to access condoms. The study also established significant differences between gender and participation in promotion of condom use ($p=0.03$) and awareness of family planning services ($p=0.02$). Though the findings indicated that health and HIV/AIDS prevention services were available and accessible in terms of physical location of health facilities, utilization of such services was a challenge. To promote and enhance effective utilization of such services, there is the need for the creation of a permissive and conducive youth-friendly climate around health facilities through appropriate HIV/AIDS health education and promotion.