

21 November 2008

By: Tudor Vieru, Science Editor



About half of pregnancies in the US are unwanted
Wikipedia Commons

One Unplanned Pregnancy Leads to at Least Another One

Study shows that other factors have little influence in these situations

A new scientific study, published in the November edition of the American Journal of Obstetrics & Gynecology, revealed that women who had an unwanted or unplanned pregnancy as they were young are more likely than others, in a control group, to have another one within two years. Major factors that influence this phenomenon are age and education, which are tightly linked to how women view relations with their partners.

The new, two year-long survey, featuring some 542 teenage girls and women, showed that those under the age of 24 were far more likely to have an unwanted pregnancy, than those above that age. Also, participants who only studied as far as high-school exhibited higher risks of getting pregnant without wanting to. This can only mean that age and education weigh considerably in their behavior.

Public health experts, led by Lindsay M. Kuroki, at Rhode Island's Brown University in Providence, say that a "serious public health concern" in the United States today is the fact that approximately 50 percent of all pregnancies are unwanted or unplanned, which could only happen due to the lack of comprehensive programs aimed at stopping this occurrence.

The fact that so many women have unwanted babies wouldn't be a problem in itself, if previous studies hadn't demonstrated that females who find themselves in these situations are very likely to continue drinking, smoking, or using drugs. Abortions are also on the rise country-wide, which prompted health experts to accuse the government of paying little attention to this issue.

"Ensuring access to family planning services, promoting usage of the most reliable forms of contraception, and providing appropriate support and resources is essential in the effort to prevent unplanned pregnancy," explained Kuroki.

The research concluded that, once the first unwanted pregnancy was over, the new moms were very likely to experience this again, sometime over the next two years. However, as opposed to the first time they got pregnant unintentionally, age and education play no role the second time, a fact that has left scientists puzzled. They say that future studies are required in this area, so as to elucidate exactly why this happens.