American Academy of Nursing

Call to Action: UNINTENDED PREGNANCY PREVENTION

Women’s Health Expert Panel

The Women’s Health Expert Panel alerts you to an urgent need to address unintended pregnancy prevention, which is an important health goal. Despite groundbreaking recommendations to expand women’s preventive services under the Affordable Care Act, unintended pregnancy prevention has been identified as a critical priority by the National Prevention Council (2011). Unintended pregnancies create a large social and economic burden to society, including delays in pregnancy care, poor mental health, poor mother-child relationship quality, and children with reduced mental and physical health plus difficulties in school (Logan, Holcombe, Manlove et al., 2007). In addition, unintended pregnancies are associated with significant costs to the health care system, estimated at $5 billion annually (Trussell, 2007). The economic value of investing in prevention of unintended pregnancy is clear: for every $1 spent by publicly funded family planning clinics, $4 is saved (Frost, Finer, & Tapales, 2008). The nursing profession and other health professions are urged to take the following steps to help curb unintended pregnancies in the US:

1. Insist your US representatives and senators oppose funding cuts to Title X, a 327 million federal program that funds multiple reproductive health prevention strategies including contraception, sexually transmitted infection treatment and cancer screening (Bendavid, 2011);

2. Create and support sexual and reproductive health care provision within a population-based public health framework that identifies unintended pregnancy prevention across primary and secondary prevention approaches;

3. Support clinical best practices that integrate sexual and reproductive health care into primary care and public health;

4. Identify community-based models of services related to unintended pregnancy prevention, then implement them (Taylor & James, 2011)

5. Develop and support the implementation of clinical practice guidelines to prevent unintended pregnancy;
6. Develop, implement, and evaluate competency-based education and practice models for health professionals to integrate sexual and reproductive health services into primary care and public health (United Nations, 2010; WHO, 2011);

7. Require prevention of unintended pregnancy as a standard component of health professional education at all accredited institutions.

References


*June 2012*