

March 10, 2019

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to bring to your attention the inaccurate information contained in the FLASH curriculum, which claims to provide “medically and scientifically accurate” education. Please see examples below which have been obtained from the FLASH curriculum available online: www.kingcounty.gov/health/flash

Lesson 7 of the Middle School FLASH curriculum states that “**in contrast to previous assumptions, research shows that most men’s pre-ejaculate fluid contains no sperm.**” The citation noted is *Killie, S.R et al, 2011 Sperm content of Pre-ejaculatory Fluid. Human Fertility, 14, 1, 48-52.* Upon verification, however, the conclusion of this study actually states the opposite: “**We conclude that a major proportion of men leak motile sperm in their pre-ejaculatory fluid.**”

In Lesson 7 of the Middle School FLASH curriculum, it states that **birth control pills “make bones stronger.”** However, a search on the US National Library of Medicine NIH reports that “**prolonged use of today’s oral contraceptives, particularly < 30mcg EE, may adversely impact young adult women’s bone density while ingesting these agents.**” *Contraception. 2010 Jan;81(1):35*

In addition, under “the truth about birth control” activity section, there are two FLASH Middle School Key Concepts in lesson 7 that are ironically misleading:

The blanket statement: “**birth control is excellent at preventing pregnancy**” can mislead students to believe that all forms of birth control are equally effective in preventing pregnancy, when in fact, no birth control method is 100% effective in preventing unwanted pregnancy. According to the CDC, **9% of women using the oral contraceptives and 18% of women whose male partners used condoms experienced an unintended pregnancy within the first year of typical use.** As a pediatrician, I have encountered teenage girls who ask in disbelief, “How did I get pregnant? I was on the pill.” When students are told, “birth control is excellent at preventing pregnancy;” they are only being told a partial truth.

The blanket statement that “**condoms are excellent at preventing pregnancy and STDs, including HIV**” again can mislead students into having a false sense of security. Although male condoms are estimated to be 90% effective in reducing HIV transmission when used correctly and consistently ([usaid.gov](http://www.usaid.gov)), condoms do not prevent transmission of genital warts (HPV) and there was only a 62% reduced risk of contracting gonorrhea and 26% reduced risk of contracting chlamydia with consistent condom use (*Public Health Reviews. Effectiveness of condoms in preventing sexually transmitted infections*” *Bulletin World Health Organization 2004 Jun; 82(6):454-461*) Again, when students are told that “condoms are excellent at preventing pregnancy and STDs;” they are only being told a partial truth.

FLASH claims to be a “comprehensive sex education program” that contains “medically and scientifically accurate” information, yet upon closer examination, it contains inaccurate information and only tells the partial truth about birth control and STDs.

Respectfully,

Michele [REDACTED], MD

Other topics to consider:

"Most lessons offer italicized scripts, not to lock you into our language, but as a tool to translate into your own words as needed." "Don't let your personal beliefs and values influence our positive portrayal of these important topics"

subjective presentation

The FLASH curriculum is based on the Theory of Planned Behavior

"The Theory of Planned Behavior posits that the combination of attitudes towards behavior, subjective norms and self efficacy shape an individual's behavior.

so what attitudes are being shaped here? That many teens are having sex and pregnancy and STDs are easily prevented?

Page 16

"You may need to refer a student for a pregnancy test or for services related to an existent pregnancy. The most appropriate referral is usually to a family planning clinic. They can perform a pregnancy test and can make additional referrals if a student is pregnant"

likely they mean Planned Parenthood - why not refer to their primary provider or pediatrician or family doc?

Page 17

"The place of values in the Classroom"

"it is neither possible nor desirable to provide value-free education. Every moment someone spends in the classroom, they are communicating some of what they believe about sexuality""FLASH is not value-free"

so what values are they mandating?

"Relatively universal values include things such as elementary school aged children should not have sex"

this is a relatively universal value? Not a universal value? There's no consensus on this??

"Non-universal issues -those without consensus in the US - are ones where a teacher should never teach or express a particular belief. But that doesn't mean these topics should be avoided altogether. The teacher's role is to provide information on these matters and to facilitate respectful discussion about them:

Example of non-universal issues where there is a wide range of values in the community include:

Abortion

Birth control

Masturbation

Sex outside of marriage

Cohabitation

At what age and under what circumstances it's ok to start having sex

so 13 y/o having sex is up for debate?

"Just because it's inappropriate in a public school setting to teach particular non-universal values, doesn't mean one can't teach about the issues. It just means that it must be done with respect for the diversity of opinion within the community. For example, a teacher may discuss abortion- what it is, where abortions are performed, the fact that it is legal in the US- but it is not appropriate for that teacher to share their beliefs about the rightness or wrongness of abortion"

but in giving information, isn't it implicitly condoning it? Approval is implied. What would parents think if a pediatrician shared with a patient that store X has the cheapest e-cigarettes in town and they have no age restrictions?

Page 1

Emphasize the importance of affirmative consent meaning conscious and voluntary agreement to engage in sexual activity as a requirement before sexual activity

can children ever provide informed consent to sex? This is not even a consideration- children should never be involved in sexual relations

Condon Scenarios

"Aiden wants to use condoms but feels embarrassed to go to the store to buy them and embarrassed about what his friends will think if he has condoms. Do you have any ideas about how Aiden can overcome these problems so that he can use condoms?"

is there a similar activity that encourages scenarios for abstinence?

Lesson 7 for grades 6-8

"Share state law about confidentiality. For example: it's important to know that here in Washington State, the law states that birth control is completely confidential for all people, including teens. The clinic staff is not allowed to tell anyone, including parents, without the teen's permission. At many of the clinics, teens can sign up for free Washington state birth control insurance. Give the names and locations of nearby clinics. Point out if services are free or low cost. For example: in this community, teens can get birth control at [insert local clinic] *what is the purpose of this information but to bypass parents?*

"All methods of birth control are much less risky for a person's body than pregnancy and childbirth"