

'Am I normal?'

Teenagers, Sexual Health and the Internet

Brown
Health Language Research Group
Nottingham University
De Montfort University

Health on the web

- In 1997 there were 25,000 websites devoted to aspects of health (Ferguson, 1997)
- 21st century estimates suggest a much higher number, from 100,000 upwards (Steelman, 2003).

Web usage

- The UK's Office of National Statistics (2004) reports that in the third quarter of 2004 52% of UK households had access to the internet compared to only 9% in the same quarter of 1998, and in October of 2004 61% of adults had used the internet in the three months prior to interview

'Cyberchondriacs'

- Harris Interactive (2003) tracked the people who search for information on health topics ('cyberchondriacs') in the USA, France, Germany and Japan for four years.
- Numbers have doubled during this time (54 million in 1998, 110 million in 2002).
- Most people say that they look for information on their own, but rely on it only if their doctor confirms the quality (60% in the USA and 47% in Japan).
- Another group tends to judge the information without consulting doctors (37% in Japan, 46% in Germany).
- In a few cases (particularly in Japan) do people look for information only if their doctor tells them to do this.

Some examples of Adolescent Health E-mails:

- i self harm, ive been cuttin myself for about a year now. i dont want my parents to know. only one of my mates knows and i trust him not to tell anyone. i want to stop it, i didfor a while, but i started again. im too shy to go see anyone about, what do i do. please help.
- im 12 and a diabetic. I only found out last november, and was just wondering, can i get a glucowatch, as pricking sohassly, but the injections k?
- dear doctor ann, my friend is a 14 year old girl who is 5'4" and only weighs 6 and a half stone. she has always been naturally skinny but now eats a lot less than she used to. i dont think she has an eating disorder because sometimes she eats normal sized meals 'if she can be bothered' and if she feels hungry and she doesnt make herself throw up afterwards or anything. she isnt worried but is there a reason to be?

N	WORD	FREQ.
1	MY	9,775
2	I	25,287
3	AM	3,594
4	SEX	3,208
5	IM	2,234
6	ME	4,659
7	PENIS	1,480
8	HELP	1,834
9	QUIZ	1,273
10	ANN	1,184
11	DONT	1,110
12	ASKED	1,443
13	PREGNANT	1,092
14	QUESTION	1,374
15	HAVE	6,237
16	IS	6,924
17	DO	5,655
18	BOYFRIEND	848
19	BULLYING	785
20	PERIOD	884
21	DR	821
22	PLEASE	1,265
23	DRUGS	757
24	HOW	2,377
25	WORRIED	744
26	U	743
27	GAY	616
28	NORMAL	746

Keywords based on a comparison of 400,000 word sub-sample of adolescent health E-mails and the 5 million word CANCODE corpus

Randomly Selected Concordance Lines of 'Worried'

Dr. ann Why Do I always feel alone and **worried** when im single?
but i have missed a period so i am a bit **worried**. What shall I do?
ann I am a 15 year old boy and am am **worried**. Well my problem is that
having unprotected sex, but i am still **worried** that i am pregnant, can i
might be pregnant. 19331. My friend is **worried** that she is pregnant
i really like this boy but im **worried** that if i ask him out hell say
n't seem to help. Please reply. I'm really **worried**. Thank you. Anxious.
my parents or go to the doctor. Thanks. **Worried**, male 13-year old.
likey im i to get mouth cancer? **worried** if weed is more dangerous
ht way. im on the pill but i am REALLY **worried** i could be pregnant. cud I be
I am **worried** about my weight 14949.

Randomly Selected Concordance Lines of 'HIV'

mouth and give oral sex to someone with **HIV**, you will be infected, this I know.
- my penis and I touched his. Can I get **HIV** through the top? 12475. is it okay
the doctor 19721. Can you be born with **HIV** or AIDs or do have to catch it ?
Can you be a carrier of an STI or of **HIV** if you are a virgin? 2764. Do period
Can you be a carrier of an sti or **HIV** if you are a virgin? 4284. I
- Can you contract **HIV** from being fingered? 4716. Is there
what are the syptoms of **HIV**/AIDS? chlamydia? 15346. AIDS 1
- were can i get checked for **hiv**
- 15452. what are the symptoms of **HIV** 15453. what are the symptoms of
. how can i prevent **hiv**
what are the signs of **hiv**

Randomly Selected Concordance Lines of 'Normal'

I'm 12, I'm 5, 3 ft and 42kg is this a **normal** weight or is it too light?
or being flat chested. worried boobs aren't **normal** size. episodes of Bulimia and often
seen that is normal. But I don't want to be **normal** I want to be thin. I find it insulting
14 and I haven't started my period am I **normal** 8687. I masturbate 8688. I use
sick for no apparent reason 13583. is it **normal** to miss a period for 3 months I
thinking about becoming a transsexual. Is it **normal** to do this?
- I still have a lot of discharge is this **normal**??
- I've been a little depressed recently. Is this **normal**?
ward and I haven't got any pubic hair am I **normal**? 19030. I am 13 and my name is
this white stuff in my underwear, am I **normal** or do I have a disease 19732. im

Doing 'normal'

- I am addicted to cereal. Is this normal?
- hi only one of my balls have dropped, is this normal? will the other one drop in time?
- Dear Dr. Ann, My cum is not white, its clear with some white in it. Do I have a problem? Is this normal? What can I do to change this?

Narratives of normality

- Hi dr A. i fink iv started my periods but im not sure coz it woz brown. i told my mum and she sed i had started and it was normal 4 my fist period. but im stil worried coz sumtimes ders brown stuf and sumtimes ders nowt der. plz help
- Hey I am a 16 female, When me and my boyfriend have sex I sometimes fart at of my vigina, is this normal?
- right by the hole in my vagina, there is. . . a thing like a ball. Is this my g-spot or is this normal??
- Dr. Ann, I have a question about my inner lips in my vagina one inner lip is small and the other inner lip is bigger and it kinda sticks out what do I do and is that normal?

The limits of normality?

- i had sex with my mum is that normal
- i have three testicles is this normal
- i am 3 and i have started my period is this normal
- I'm a transexual, is it normal?

Worried narratives

- I am worried I may be pregnant but am still having normal regular menstrual cycles. I have taken a couple of home pregnancy tests and they say negative but I'm worried about the time I do the tests as they say you should take it on the first day of your missed period, so if I'm still having my periods, when's the best time to take the test?
- I had protected sex 24 hrs ago the condom did not break I am still worried that it may leaked. I was wondering how I would be able to make sure I am not pregnant and a couple hrs later after sex I received my period can I get pregnant like that?
- I started my period roughly two years ago. It's been quite regular, but all of a sudden, I've missed about 4 periods and still haven't come on. I've never had sex though! I'm really worried. Why is this and what do I do?

Using corpus data in language learning

- Hadley (2002), advocated making increasing use of corpora of the language being taught in second language learning.
- Johns and King (1991) the " . . . language-learner is also, essentially, a research worker whose learning needs to be driven by access to linguistic data - hence the term 'data-driven learning' (DDL) to describe the approach" (p. 2).

Using 'real world' data

- Sinclair (1997, p.30) 'present real examples only'
- Recent work on everyday explanations for illness has disclosed a rich variety of lay explanatory frameworks (Popay et al 2003). Explanations for ill health ranged from 'beer fags egg and chips' (p. 7) to 'worry and stress' (p. 8) and included 'worse housing, high unemployment and a lack of hope in the area. (p. 9).