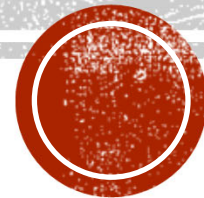


PERIOD POVERTY

Maya Kumar, MD, FAAP, FRCPC



WHAT IS PERIOD POVERTY?

- Lack of access to needed menstrual hygiene products (Wall, 2020)
 - May have to use alternatives such as toilet paper, paper towels, rags or clothing strips, socks, newspapers, diapers, etc
 - Poor menstrual hygiene may lead to higher rates of GU infections
 - Enormous source of emotional distress in school and workplaces



HOW COMMON IS PERIOD POVERTY?

- Study of female high school students in St. Louis (Sebert Kuhlmann et al, 2020)
 - Almost half did not have \$ to buy menstrual products at least once in the last school year
 - 17% missed at least one day of school in the last year due to lack of access to menstrual products
 - 33% of 9th grade students



HOW COMMON IS PERIOD POVERTY?

- Study of students 13-19 yrs across the USA (Thinx & PERIOD, 2019)
 - 1 in 5 lacked financial resources to buy menstrual products
 - 25% missed class because they lacked menstrual products
 - Additional 59% knew someone else who had



HOW COMMON IS PERIOD POVERTY?

- Among college-age women in the USA (Cardoso et al, 2021):
 - 14.2% experienced in the last year
 - 10% experienced every month
 - **STRONG** association with moderate to severe depression (PHQ9)



HOW COMMON IS PERIOD POVERTY?

- Low income women >18 years (Sebert Kuhlmann, 2019)
 - 64% could not afford menstrual products in the last year
 - 21% could not afford monthly
 - Almost half had to choose between buying food or menstrual products in the last year
 - No differences by age



HIGH RISK GROUPS

- More likely to affect black, Latinx, immigrant youth (Cardoso et al, 2021)
- Low-income
- Non-binary, transgender, gender diverse youth
 - On top of \$: stigma, accessibility and availability



WHAT CAN POLICYMAKERS DO?

- 2015: pilot program in NYC public school: provision of free menstrual products increases class attendance and reduces excused absences among female students
- 2018: California, Illinois, New Hampshire, New York State enact laws providing menstrual products in at least some schools
- November 2020: Scotland becomes first country to make menstrual products completely free
 - Followed by England, Wales, New Zealand



TAMPON TAX

- 30 states: sales tax applies to tampons (up to 7%)
- Other 20 states:
 - 5 states: no sales tax at all
 - **14 states and DC: sales tax exempt for tampons**
 - California: “temporary” tax exemption (expires in 2022)



CALIFORNIA ASSEMBLY BILL 10 (2017)

- Applies to public schools containing any of grades 6-12 AND 40% of students below federal poverty threshold
- 50% of restrooms must be stocked with menstrual hygiene products (pads and tampons), provided free to students



FREE4ME INITIATIVE (SD COUNTY)

- Began May 2021 - To help improve access with COVID-related school closures
- Partnership with Aunt Flow® company
- Installed 58 free menstrual vending machines in 24 county facilities



ASSEMBLY BILL 367: IN PROCESS (2021)

- “Menstrual Equity for All Act”
- To start in 2022-2023 academic year
- Removes requirement for 40% student poverty – ALL public schools including grade 6-12
- Menstrual products to be free, accessible, and available in all women’s restrooms, all-gender restrooms, and at least one male restroom
- Would also apply to CSU, community colleges, and “encouraged” for UC schools and private universities
 - At least one designated site on campus



WHAT CAN WE DO?

- Letter to our state representatives written by Dr. Nancy Graff
- Support for AB367?
- Other ideas?

- Please let me know if you want to help!!
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