



Sexual and reproductive health and rights today and tomorrow

*ICRH celebrates 20 years of SRHR research, training and
advocacy*

Friday 5 December 2014, Het Pand, Gent (Belgium)

Symposium on “Behaviour change interventions: a theoretical approach”

While research investments in biomedical and clinical technology remain important, it has been shown many times that improving delivery and utilisation of existing technologies have a tremendous, immediate impact on sexual and reproductive health, and health in general. Nevertheless many barriers, at personal and socio-cultural level as well as at the level of health services and policy, stand in the way of impacting human behavior, and by doing so continue to stretch the gap between efficacy and efficiency.

In order to detect and address the prevailing hindrances and to identify the ‘push factors’ of behaviour change, research and interventions often rely on theories of health behaviour. Theory-driven programmes are believed to be superior - as opposed to those based on intuition, experience or tradition -, since they are based on a better understanding of human behaviour and act upon key components. Indeed, these theories explain the mechanisms that influence human behaviour. Besides factors at personal level, some theories also include interpersonal variables or characteristics at community, health system and/or policy level.

By providing a framework and guidance, health behaviour theories help researchers to study behavioural change and to develop interventions. However, critics claim that these theories may also blind researchers for important factors not included in the theory. Misuse and incorrect implementation may indeed lead to poorly developed interventions and even to incorrect conclusions. It is therefore important to continually evaluate the (use of) theories and to adapt them to each new study context. **During our symposium we will review the use of health behavior theory in sexual and reproductive health interventions in different settings as well as discuss how to improve these theories and their use.**

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Welcome

13.15-13.25: *Heleen Vermandere* (Ghent University - International Centre for Reproductive Health, Belgium): **Welcoming & General Introduction to the sessions**

Session 1: Pros and cons of health behavioural theories

13.25-13.45: *Gerjo Kok* (Maastricht University, the Netherlands & University of Texas - Health Science Center, USA): **Planning Health Promotion Programmes; An Intervention Mapping Approach** (*keynote lecture*)

13.45-13.55: *Heleen Vermandere* (Ghent University - ICRH, Belgium): **Testing the Health Belief Model in the context of cervical cancer vaccination in Eldoret, Kenya**

13.55-14.05: *Kristien Michielsen* (Ghent University - International Centre for Reproductive Health, Belgium): **The theoretical basis of HIV prevention interventions for young people in sub-Saharan Africa: does the use of behavioural theories increase effectiveness?**

14.05-14.15: *Wim Delva* (South African Centre for Epidemiological Modelling and Analysis, South Africa): **Uncovering the (lack of) social science behind mathematical models of behaviour change for HIV prevention**

14.15-14.25: **Questions & Answers**, moderated by *Sara De Meyer* (Ghent University - International Centre for Reproductive Health, Belgium)

14.25-14.45: *Coffee break*

Session 2: The use of behavioural change theories in sexual and reproductive health promotion: case studies

14.45-15.05: *Katherine Brown* (Coventry University - Applied Research Centre in Health & Lifestyle Interventions, UK): **Theories of behaviour change: applications in sexual health research and intervention development**

15.05-15.15: *Rebecka Lundgren* (Georgetown University - Institute for Reproductive Health, USA): **Sparking change through social networks: addressing social barriers to family planning use**

15.15-15.25: *Peter Decat* (Ghent University - Department of Family Medicine and Primary Health, Belgium): **Community-based interventions promoting safe sexual behaviour among adolescents in three Latin-American cities: impact and impact modifying factors**

15.25-15.35: *Erika Frans* (Sensoa - Flemish expertise centre for sexual health, Belgium): **How we developed The Flagsystem, an intervention on prevention of sexual abusive behaviour**

15.35-15.45: **Questions & Answers**, moderated by *Sara De Meyer* (Ghent University - ICRH, Belgium)

Discussion

15.45-16.00: **To use or not to use: reflections on behavioural theories in sexual and reproductive health promotion**, moderated by *Olivier Degomme*, with participants: *Katherine Brown, Peter Decat, Wim Delva, Erika Frans, Gerjo Kok* and *Rebecka Lundgren*