

## Student Concern about Common Contagious Diseases

- Who selected this issue as a top health concern for Penn students?
- 13 % of undergraduates
  - 20 % of grad/professional/other students
- Who selected this as a top personal health concern?
- 21 % of undergraduates
  - 18 % of grad/professional/other students
- Which groups are more likely to report personal concern about this issue?<sup>1</sup>
- None

## Prevalence

- Indicator 1: How many respondents report having a common contagious disease (past 12 mos.)?
- 64 % of undergraduates
  - 57 % of grad/professional/other students
- Indicator 2: How many respondents report having mononucleosis (past 12 mos.)?
- 2 % of undergraduates
  - 1 % of grad/professional/other students
  - 2% is the national average<sup>2</sup>

## Impact on Academic Performance

- How do respondents rank this issue's impact on their academics?<sup>3</sup>
- Moderate, 2.0 for undergraduates
  - Low, 1.0 for graduate/professional/other

## Preferred Information Delivery

- Among those who selected this issue as a top personal health concern, how do they prefer to get information and/or help?
- 36 % selected website
  - 35 % selected individual, face-to-face help
- Among those who selected this issue as a top personal health concern, from whom do they prefer to get information and/or help?
- 79 % selected health professional

<sup>1</sup> Results of a logistic regression identifying these factors as statistically significantly related to reporting concern about the issue.

<sup>2</sup> Source: *Reference Group Executive Summary Spring 2000*, National College Health Assessment.

<sup>3</sup> Ranking is based on median of the distribution on a scale where 5 = "Extreme Negative Impact" to 1 = "No Negative Impact".

## Brief Literature Review

Amazingly enough, there are very few studies evaluating the efficacy of handwashing interventions for any population other than medical personnel. In the US, a few studies examined handwashing interventions with elementary school children. One study tested three different interventions (education sessions about handwashing, reminder posters and provision of handwipes, and a combination of the two) and found statistically significant increases in handwashing frequency among first graders when compared to controls<sup>4</sup>. Another study suggests that handwashing interventions have the potential to decrease school absenteeism<sup>5</sup>.

## Programming Suggestions

Assuming that college students are as intelligent as first graders, reminder posters in bathrooms (all around campus, not just in residence halls) just might work. Evaluation will be difficult but could be a very interesting senior thesis for some student who would want to do observational research. Tracking factors like absenteeism in classes, and self-reported illnesses would be great information to have to combine with pre and post observational studies of handwashing frequency.

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<sup>4</sup> Early, E. et. al. (1998). Effect of several interventions on the frequency of handwashing among elementary public school children. *Am J of Infection Control*, 26(3). 263-269.

<sup>5</sup> Kimel, L. (1996). Handwashing education can decrease illness absenteeism. *Journal of School Nursing*, 12(2). 14-16.