**Symposium “Sexual health: (narrative) approaches in research and interventions”**

**23rd April 2015**

In cooperation with the HealthNar exchange programme, the NeFCA health communication division organised a symposium “Sexual health: (narrative) approaches in research and interventions” at the University of Antwerp. During three sessions, eight speakers talked about their work on sexual health narratives in research and in practice.

In the first session, Annebeth Bels (UAntwerp) and Ann Rousseau (KU Leuven) outlined their research on preteens’ consumption of sexualising and objectifying media content, in which they use both quantitative and qualitative methods to investigate content, use and impact of these types of media. Secondly, Prof. John de Wit (UNSW) introduced the “Speak Up Now” study on unwanted sexual experiences with young people in the Netherlands. In this study, open-ended survey questions were used to collect stories on young people’s best and worst sexual experiences. Combined with findings from the quantitative survey, these stories were used to develop a typology of scenarios of unwanted sexual experiences.

Lies Verhetsel of the Flemish expertise centre for sexual health “Sensoa” ([www.sensoa.be](http://www.sensoa.be/)) opened the second session. She gave an overview of the different projects in which Sensoa uses narratives and stories to convey prevention-related messages to Flemish youth, including the “Weetewa” video blogging project (<http://weetewa.blogspot.be>), and stories of youth reporters on their website “Alles over seks” (<http://www.allesoverseks.be>). After these examples of sexual health practice, Prof. Lelia Green (Edith Cowan University) presented findings from the EU and AU Kinds Online studies to discuss societal fears of children’s exposure to online sexual content and how these fears affect current policy.

After a tasteful lunch, the forty participants were ready to engage in the third and final session. Kathleen Van Royen (UAntwerpen) talked about adolescents’ views on online gender harassment and about possible interventions, including reflective user interfaces on social network sites and story-matching interventions. Subsequently, Dr. Philippe Adam (UNSW) introduced the “Chat Smart” intervention that aims to change the negative influence of online dating and chatting on young gay men’s sexual risk taking, by embedding constructed and tailored personal narratives to help increase self-regulatory practices. Dr. Udi Davidovich (University of Amsterdam) concluded the symposium. He explained how findings on the barriers of sexual protective behaviour can be translated into prevention strategies and (online and mobile) interventions within the scope of HIV and STI prevention.

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