No, Using Condoms Doesn’t Mean You’re Smarter

Journal retracts study that claimed that people who used condoms for HIV prevention were smarter than those who don’t.

January 13, 2021 By Heather Boerner

A British medical journal has retracted a 2020 study that purported that smarter people are more likely to use condoms, according to a report in Retraction Watch.

Titled “No Glove, No Love: General intelligence predicts increased likelihood of condom use in response to HIV,” the article claimed to have found that “higher levels of general intelligence was significantly associated with increased condom use” among 211 heterosexual college students when they received education about the ability of condoms to stop HIV transmission. The study was published in April 2020 in the journal Personality and Individual Differences. Just five months later, the journal retracted the paper after a reader challenged the findings.

In the retraction, the journal editor said that a reanalysis of the data “identified several errors that were made by computing some of the aggregate variables in this study.” In other words, when the work was corrected, intelligence and condom use had nothing to do with each other.

All this says nothing about the outdated premise of the study. The paper cites studies by Satoshi Kanazawa, who holds odious views on intelligence and race. Plus, author Sean T.H. Lee, a PhD student at Singapore Management University School of Social Sciences, and colleagues use 1994 data to suggest that condoms are “the most effective way to curb this life-threatening risk” caused by HIV. The paper makes no mention of HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis(PrEP) or the science behind Undetectable = Untransmittable, choosing instead to describe HIV as “fatal” and condoms and abstinence as the only way to avoid transmitting or acquiring the virus.

The journal that published the study, Personality and Individual Differences, receives a high rating for scientific rigor from third-party monitors. Still, the journal has been dogged by requests to retract the papers of its late founder, Hans Eysenck, according to Retraction Watch.

Click here to read the story in Retraction Watch.

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