Yes, There's Likely a Link Between Condom Use in Porn and in Real Life

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Men who have sex with men (MSM) who watch bareback (condomless) porn are apparently more likely to forgo condoms for their sexual encounters. Conversely, among MSM there appears to be a connection between watching porn in which the performers use condoms and using condoms in real life.

Publishing their findings in PLOS ONE, researchers used Craigslist and Facebook ads to recruit 265 adult MSM for an online survey about their porn watching and sexual habits. The men lived within 50 miles of New York City, Philadelphia, Baltimore or Washington, DC.

Ninety-two percent of the men said they watched porn that depicted condomless anal sex. Forty-eight percent believed that observing this sort of porn had influenced them to have riskier sex. Seventy percent said viewing porn had led them to perform acts that they saw, and 55 percent said watching porn had led them to look for sex afterward. The men agreed that bareback porn contributed to their having riskier sex.

"These findings have important policy and HIV prevention implications," Martin J. Downing Jr., PhD, of Public Health Solutions in New York City who is one of the study's authors, said in a press release.

The State Assembly of Utah recently passed a bill calling pornography a "public health crisis."

According to Downing, "Our findings run counter to Utah's recent legislation, since we now know that most pornography is not associated with more sexual risk behaviors." In other words, most pornography does not lead to public health problems.

The authors of the paper conclude: "Indeed, our finding that viewing pornography that contains condom use is associated with fewer condomless anal sex encounters suggests that pornography may have a potentially important protective function by encouraging men to use condoms."

More research is needed to determine whether pornography featuring condom use can be employed as a safer sex intervention to successfully encourage less risky sex among consumers.

Previous research has found that, in general, MSM enjoy bareback porn, but researchers worry about how it may affect their sexual risk taking.

To read a press release about the study, click here.

To read the study abstract, click here.

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