Background

A growing body of research suggests that parents play an important role in influencing college-bound teens' choices around alcohol and drug use (Wechsler et al., 2000). Recognized as one of the major public health concerns on U.S. college campuses (Wechsler et al. 2000), alcohol use is a significant concern for college students. We hypothesized that, as compared to the control group, parents who reviewed the MyStudentBody website in the weeks before their children began college would be more likely to have read their college's alcohol and drug policy.

Results

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed in two ways: (1) Braver & Braver’s method to assess baseline sensitization effects and treatment effect of intervention immediately post-intervention, and (2) mixed models were run to test differences between conditions over time (condition-by-time effect) for all outcomes of interest, only using data from participants measured at baseline. Two mixed model analyses were run on each outcome, with the first analysis testing for mean differences between conditions at each assessment point relative to baseline (time treated as a categorical variable) and the second linear trend analysis (LTA) testing for differences in linear trends across all time points (time treated as a covariate).

Hypothesis 1: Parents who reviewed MyStudentBody will be more likely to have engaged in binge drinking in the past two weeks.

Hypothesis 2: Students whose parents reviewed MyStudentBody website will demonstrate increased confidence for communicating about alcohol and other drugs with their children as compared to the control group.

Hypothesis 3: Parents who reviewed MyStudentBody will be more likely to employ protective behavioral strategies with their children as compared to the control group.

Conclusion

We conducted a randomized controlled trial to test the efficacy of an online parent-based college alcohol and other drug use prevention program. We found that parents who reviewed MyStudentBody were more likely to have engaged in binge drinking (e.g., “avoid drinking games”) than parents in the control group. Moreover, we found that students whose parents reviewed MyStudentBody were more likely to use protective behavioral strategies when “partying.” In particular, students were more likely to use protective behavioral strategies associated with “manner” (e.g., avoiding mixing different types of alcohol) of drinking, as well as “stopping/limiting” drinking (e.g., having a friend let you know when you’ve had enough). Teaching parents the skills to discuss issues related to alcohol and other drugs with their children is critical for reducing college student binge drinking.