

Knowledge and need of Emergency Contraception Among Married Women Attending a Public Sector University Hospital in Sindh

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ABSTRACT

OBJECTIVES: To assess knowledge and need for emergency contraception among the women coming to Liaquat university hospital.

METHODS: A questionnaire based survey was conducted among 200 married women presenting at department of obstetrics & gynecology, Liaquat University Hospital Hyderabad, Sindh during the period of September to December 2009. The administered questionnaire served to find the status of knowledge and need for emergency contraceptives among these women. Ethical consideration and confidentiality was ensured. The data entry, processing and analysis were done using SPSS version 11.

RESULTS: Out of 200 women 172 (84.3%) were aware of contraception but only 47 (23%) had knowledge about emergency contraception. Eighty-seven (42%) women were without any formal education. Lady health workers and doctors were source of contraceptive knowledge in 104 (52%) cases. Unplanned pregnancy was observed in 134 (65.7%) women but unwanted was only in 39 (19.1%) women. Drugs were used to get rid of pregnancy by 12 (5.9%), and 13 (6.4%) went for termination of pregnancy.

CONCLUSION: Contraceptive knowledge among 84% women is partial; as knowledge regarding emergency contraception is seen in only 23% and this indicates lack on part of knowledge provider. Lady health worker have been the main source of contraceptive knowledge among the community according to our findings. A prevalence of 67% of unplanned pregnancies is liable to increase acceptance of emergency contraception. The unmet need for emergency contraception is demonstrated by 13% who tried termination. Quality training of community health care workers to ensure complete knowledge will be helpful in increasing use of emergency contraception.

KEYWORDS: Knowledge, Contraception, Lady health workers, unplanned pregnancy, unwanted pregnancy.

INTRODUCTION

Reduction in population growth rate in previous decades from 3% to 2.1% has not reduced the number of unwanted pregnancies in the country¹. Pakistan is facing the problem of much higher growth rate compared to other developing countries. Unintended pregnancies are usually the ones that results in terminations, safe or unsafe with all its complications, therefore are of great concern in the developing world². It is estimated that around 120 million women want to postpone a pregnancy or modify their family size. In Pakistan one out of seven pregnant women terminates her pregnancy by choice and this makes the practice of induced abortion very common in the country³. Both in developed and developing countries one of the major health problems is unwanted pregnancies because of resultant complications as a result of termination. If we increase contraceptive knowledge and availability, especially of emergency contraception this problem can be overcome successfully. Use of any method to avoid pregnancy after unprotected inter-

course is called emergency post coital contraception. emergency contraceptive pills and IUD insertion are two methods used for the purpose and are declared safe as well as effective by WHO. At present, in Pakistan, emergency contraception (EC) pills are supplied through the ministry of population welfare (MOPW), ministry of health and the green star social marketing program. The number of unintended pregnancies and abortions can be reduced by using emergency contraceptive pills as backup support in case of method failure⁴. There have been few studies^{5,6} exploring contraceptive knowledge and prevalence among women but vast literature search revealed only three studies on emergency contraception. We designed this cross-sectional study to assess the knowledge and need for emergency contraception among women coming to obstetrics & gynecology clinics at Liaquat University Hospital. We expected the result of study will come up with new perspectives to the problem of population explosion and help in strategic planning in areas of particular need either at national or local level.

METHODOLOGY

To assess knowledge and need of emergency contraception among women coming to Liaquat university hospital.

METHODS

A cross sectional study was carried out to assess knowledge and need of emergency contraception among 200 married women attending obstetrics & gynecology department at Liaquat University Hospital during the period of September 2009 to December 2009. Convenient sampling was employed and there were no criteria for exclusion from survey. The survey was conducted over a period of 16 weeks on a 2 paged pre-tested questionnaire in English. First part of the questionnaire was regarding demographic characteristics of women, where as second part contained direct closed end question about their knowledge and use of contraception. The need is assessed by number of unplanned and unwanted pregnancy in reproductive years of a woman and her attempt for termination. The survey was carried out through face to face interview. The sample involves an irregular territory originating near the Hyderabad and extending to the nearby rural settings as well as those who are referred from surrounding private and district hospitals for tertiary level care. It includes women from a wide range of socio-economic circumstances. Three postgraduates were assigned to take interview along with principal investigator after one hour of classroom training and practical demonstration of interview. Ethical consideration and confidentiality was ensured. The data entry, processing and analysis were done using SPSS version 11. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics like frequencies, means and ratios.

RESULTS

Participants of the study were 200 women, selected with convenience and after their acceptance for participation. Minimum age was 18-years and maximum was 45-years with the mean of 29.65±4.92 years. Among these 87 (43.5%) were without formal education, and more than half i.e. 113 (56.5%) women had some formal education (**Table I**). One hundred and seventy-two (84.3%) women had heard about contraception, health workers (2/3rd) and doctors (1/3rd) were the source of information in 105 (52%) of women. Emergency contraception was heard by 47 (23%) women, whereas 16 (7.8%) of the participants knew use of IUCD as emergency contraception. Unplanned pregnancy was experienced by 134 (65.7%) women but unwanted was only in 39 (19.1%) women. Medicine were used to get rid of pregnancy by 12 (5.9%) and 13 (6.4%) went for termination of pregnancy (**Table II**).

TABLE I: DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

(n=200)

Characteristics	N (%)
Age groups	
20-25	47 (23.5)
26-30	89 (44.5)
31-35	45 (22.5)
36-40	14 (7)
>40	5 (2.5)
Education	
No formal education	87 (43.5)
Primary	64 (32)
Secondary	35 (17.5)
College	08 (04)
Professional	06 (03)
Income	
<10,000	153 (76.5)
>10,000	47 (23.5)
Area	
Urban	114 (57)
Rural	86 (43)
Parity	
0	4 (2)
1	46 (22.6)
2	29 (14.2)
3	44 (21.6)
4	30 (14.7)
5	24 (11.8)
6	7 (3.4)
7	9 (4.4)
8	5 (2.5)
9	2 (1)

TABLE II: CONTRACEPTIVE KNOWLEDGE AND NEED

Knowledge about contraception	
Present	172 (84.3%)
Absent	28 (13%)
Knowledge about emergency contraception	
Present	47 (23%)
Absent	153 (75%)
Source of knowledge	
Health Professional	105 (52.5%)
Lady Health Worker	78 (74.2%)
Doctors	27 (25.8%)
Relatives	55 (27.5%)
Media	40 (20.0%)
Need of contraceptives	
Unplanned pregnancies	134 (67%)
Attempts for TOP	13 (6.5%)

DISCUSSION

This study has tested women from those Pakistani families, who in common tend to seek free medical help at public sector hospital. Contraceptive knowledge among 174 (84.3%) is comparable^{7,8} to the other areas of the country. Eighty seven (42%) of women were without any formal education but contacted some health provider in 52% of cases this indicate women are dynamic⁹ and can access the health facility. This study also revealed that community health program is more promising in increasing the contraceptive awareness¹⁰ and can further be utilized to increase use prevalence and backup support in the form of emergency contraception. Contrary to the study done by Bibi et al media had little role in contraceptive awareness. Whereas SA Sha's¹¹ findings on the role of media as source of contraceptive knowledge are similar to ours. F Irfan et al in their study at Karachi teaching hospital revealed that general practitioners or family medicine clinics were identified by 50% of women as their main sources of knowledge about EC. The results of our study regarding the little knowledge of emergency contraception among the respondents, questions the quality of contraceptive care services. It also question the training of community health workers as contraceptive care providers¹², specially when most(52%) of the respondents identified health care providers¹³ as their source of knowledge, 2/3rd of them were lady health workers(LHW). Factors that lead to unplanned/mistimed pregnancy include lack of knowledge about back-up support and use of Emergency Contraception (EC) in case of method failure or unprotected sex. WHO has recommended EC as a safe, convenient and effective method of modern contraception. In a survey, women aged 18 to 45 who were seeking urgent care, Schwarz et al¹⁴ found that 1 in 10 of them may have benefited from immediate use of ECPs. Although EC is effective and safe method it is still not used widely. The poor utilization of these available methods is due to many factors that include poor knowledge of each method and its effectiveness. A Turkish study on 1600 women attending family planning clinics showed that only 9.8% of these women have heard about emergency contraception and none was using it¹⁵. Similar results were obtained from another study¹⁶ conducted on 400 married women who attended family clinics at a teaching hospital where 88% women did not know about the use of EC. Out of 11.5% who used EC, only 40% were aware of the correct timing of effectiveness and none of these women ever heard about use of Intra Uterine Contraceptive Device (IUCD) insertion as a method for EC. Another study¹⁷ in Liyari among 300 respondents, 83% were housewives, 29 (43%) had used contraception while 9 (3%) said to have at-

tempted an induced abortion. Only 144 (48%) had heard of emergency contraception (EC), 123 (41%) knew only about hormonal method of EC and only 6 (2%) knew the correct timing of EC. Similar to these studies our 134 (65.7%) women expressed having unplanned pregnancies and 5.9% used some kind of medicine to abort it and 6.4% intended to have surgical abortion. The figures are same as other studies and emphasize the need for improving quality¹⁸ of contraceptive counseling by health providers. Health-care providers have contributed a lot to increase contraceptive awareness but at the same time studies identified the need to know more about emergency contraception¹⁹. Secondly this study confirms the need for emergency contraception in our society by showing 6.4% of women who had termination of pregnancy and nearly same number tried self medications to get rid of unwanted pregnancy. The strength of this study is that it reveals the strong role of health workers as source of contraceptive knowledge. Authorities should utilize them effectively not only in contraceptive knowledge dissemination but also for behavior change communication within the community to address many health problems related to population control. Limitation of our study is small sample size, as after stratification of data no significant difference observed among women of different age, parity and residing status in reference to contraceptive need and knowledge.

CONCLUSION

Contraceptive Knowledge among 84% women is partial, lacking many important aspects, which should be discussed with women by health workers. Knowledge regarding emergency contraception in only 23% again indicates lack on part of knowledge provider Community health worker are the main source of contraceptive knowledge dissemination. Self realization and high prevalence (67%) of unplanned pregnancies are liable to increase acceptance of emergency contraception. The unmet need for emergency contraception was demonstrated by 13% who tried termination. Quality training of community health care workers and revalidation of training is necessary to achieve desired results from family planning services in the country.

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