

EXPLORING THE KNOWLEDGE, AWARENESS AND PRACTICE OF CONTRACEPTION AMONG WOMEN OF REPRODUCTIVE AGE GROUP: A CROSS-SECTIONAL STUDY

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Abstract

For a global progress on women's health, women's healthcare decisions should be in the hands of women. Knowledge and awareness about various methods of contraception is of paramount importance to avoid unintended pregnancies in women and hence helps in improving women's health, career and also global development. In spite of widespread availability of contraception and family planning services in India, the need has not been met leading to unintended pregnancies and increase in abortions. This cross sectional study aimed to explore knowledge, awareness and practice of contraception among women of reproductive age group, to identify various approaches to improve contraceptive behavior and women's health. A questionnaire based approach was utilized involving 100 women of reproductive age group visiting the outpatient department, to assess their knowledge about various methods of contraception, source of knowledge and their contraceptive practice. Results highlighted the significant gap between awareness about various methods of contraception and practice of contraception. Though 91% were aware of at least one method of contraception, only 61% have ever used any mode of contraception. Similar findings were found in existing literature, implying the need to improve the attitude towards practice of contraception. This Study contributes to the ongoing movements towards women's wellness and highlights the need for a comprehensive approach to improve contraceptive practices among women of reproductive age group.

Keywords: Contraception, Women's Health, Awareness.

INTRODUCTION

Contraception is very important to prevent unintended pregnancies and for population control. Knowledge about contraception is necessary to prevent illegal abortions and to protect women's health. Methods of contraception include oral contraceptive pills, implants, injectables, patches, vaginal rings, intrauterine devices, condoms, male and female sterilization, lactational amenorrhea methods, and natural methods. They have different mechanisms of action and effectiveness in preventing unintended pregnancy. Among the 1.9 billion women of reproductive age group (15–49 years) worldwide in 2021, 1.1 billion have a need for family planning. Of these, 874 million are using modern contraceptive methods, and 164 million have an unmet need for contraception [1]. The proportion of women of reproductive age (aged 15–49 years) who have their need for family planning satisfied with modern methods (SDG indicator 3.7.1) is 77.5% globally in 2022, a 10% increase since 1990 (67%) [2]. Contraception helps in improving women's health by preventing unwanted pregnancy. Ensuring awareness and access to contraception will bring significant health benefits. With women achieving in their career globally, adequate awareness and practice of contraception could help in ensuring her health, career and global development. Hence this study aims at assessing knowledge and awareness of women about various methods of contraception and practice.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

To gain knowledge about awareness and practice of contraception among antenatal mothers visiting the outpatient department at Bhaarith medical college and hospital, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, a comprehensive cross-sectional study methodology was employed. Initially, a questionnaire comprising a diverse range of questions was developed.

After obtaining ethical committee clearance, 100 Antenatal mothers who visited the outpatient department, between the age group 25 to 35 years, who were willing to participate in the study were included. Informed consent was obtained from the participant after explaining the study and ensuring anonymity.

To facilitate data collection, a questionnaire was administered to the participants. Questions to assess awareness about various methods of contraception, their contraceptive practice and source of knowledge were included. Participants were encouraged to complete the questionnaire.

Data was collected, entered in Google Sheet and analyzed with SPSS software.

RESULTS

There was a significant level of engagement among the participants

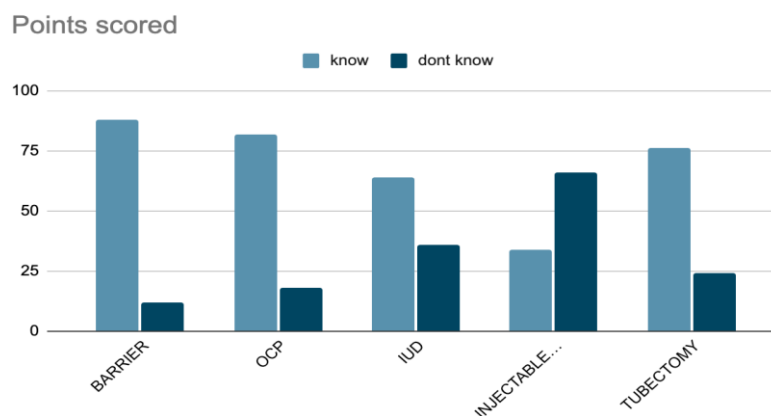


Figure 1: Awareness about various methods of contraception among the participants

Of the 100 participants in the study, 91% were aware of at least one method of contraception. 88% were aware of the barrier method of contraception. 82% were aware of oral contraceptive pills. 64% had knowledge about intrauterine devices. 76% were aware of tubectomy. Only 34% had an idea about injectable contraceptives.

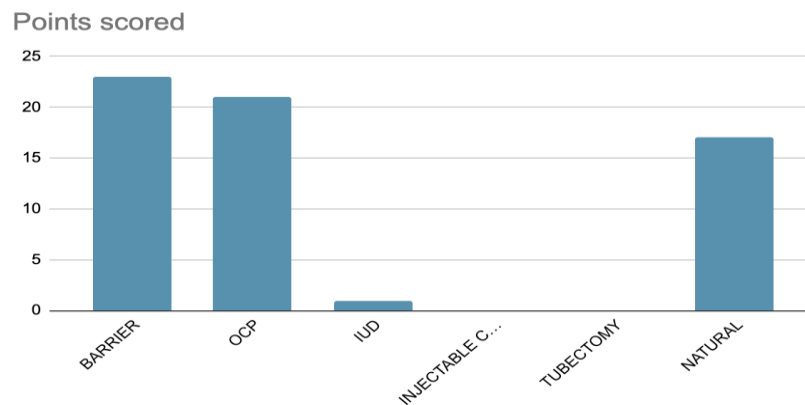


Figure 2: Practice of contraception by participants

Barrier was the most commonly used method of contraception (23%) followed by OCP 21% and natural methods 17%. Of all the participants, 39% have never used any mode of contraception.

Most of the participants 51% in our study learnt about contraception first from family and friends, 31% from health care workers and 9% from tv/radio.

DISCUSSION

In spite of widespread availability of contraception and family planning services throughout India, the need has not been met. Unwanted pregnancies, unplanned births and abortions have increased. In 2022, global contraceptive prevalence of any method was estimated at 65% and of modern methods at 58.7% for married or in a union women [3].

Study by Nayak et al, reported 100% awareness about at least one method of contraception but significant non usage of contraception [4]. Similarly, in our study 91% were aware of at least one method of contraception, but 39% never used any mode of contraception. This implies a significant gap between awareness and practice of contraception. According to Olamijulo and Olorunfemi [5], family planning services and supplies prevent 187 million unintended pregnancies every year, and this includes 60 million unplanned births and 105 million abortions. However, the results of this study suggest that participants were more knowledgeable about condoms, intrauterine devices (IUD), and oral contraceptive pills. Similarly another study showed that IUDs are increasingly used worldwide in nulliparous as well as parous young women [6]. In our study, only 64% had knowledge about IUD and Barrier was the most commonly used method of contraception (23%).

In Srivastava Et al's study, 70% gained knowledge from family and friends and 39% from TV/Radio in northern rural India [7]. Similarly, most of the participants (51%) in our study learnt about contraception first from family and friends, 31% from health care workers and 9% from tv/radio. In spite of knowledge about contraception, 39% of the participants never used any methods of contraception in our study. Hence widespread education programmes are required to encourage usage of various methods of contraception among women. Exposure to mass media has shown to significantly impact contraceptive usage in a study by Thyagarajan et al [8]. Tv, radio and other means of mass communication should be widely used to impart knowledge to improve contraceptive practice.

Community health workers have been instrumental in reducing unmet need for contraception in many developing countries[9,10]. Only 31% of our participants learnt about contraceptives from health workers. Hence, health care workers must use every opportunity to educate women about contraception and help to improve their attitude towards the practice of contraception.

CONCLUSION

Strategies to promote widespread use and availability of contraception have to be developed. Education programmes will help to improve attitude towards contraception and hence increase practice of contraception among women of reproductive age group.

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