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Original Research Article

## Knowledge and practices about family planning among women attending the Obstetrics Outpatient Department of a newly established tertiary care center

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### ABSTRACT

**Background:** Birth spacing and appropriate family planning is the milestone for long term good health of both the mother and the child and in turn the betterment of the whole society. Before starting the Family Planning clinic, we wanted to have a thorough understanding of the levels of awareness and acceptance of various family planning methods among the women attending the outpatient department of this tertiary care hospital. This preliminary data would be helpful in planning suitable programs which would be helpful in enhancing the family planning acceptance and modifying the existing steps of approach.

**Methods:** A cross-sectional descriptive study was done in the department of Obstetrics and Gynecology of the tertiary care hospital. The study group included 200 women within the reproductive (18-45 years) age group.

**Results:** 88% of the participants were aware of some or the other methods of contraception. According to the participants, the main source of information was health care workers, friends, family members (mother and sisters) and various social platforms and television. 37% of women were not using any method despite being aware of contraceptive methods. Maximum women (65) were following coitus interruptus as a natural method of contraception. 16.5% of women were using barrier method of contraception. Unawareness about contraceptive methods was the major reason behind not using any method of contraception. Though knowledge about contraception was reported by 88% of the study population, only 63% of them were actually using some method of contraception.

**Conclusions:** The study shows that there is a gap between the level of awareness about various family planning services and the actual practice of any method of contraception by the study population. So, the main aim of starting of the family planning clinic at our institute would be to bridge this gap.

**Keywords:** Knowledge, Practice, Family planning, Contraception

### INTRODUCTION

A woman's health is greatly affected by the family planning programs which can provide them universal access to reproductive and sexual health care services and up to date information on the varied family planning methods, their advantages and side effects if any. Family planning services have been identified as the most cost effective and rewarding methods towards achieving gender equality and capacitating women across the world with knowledge so that they can take better control of their

body by making appropriate contraceptive choices.<sup>1</sup> Birth spacing and appropriate family planning is the milestone for long term good health of both the mother and the child and in turn the betterment of the whole society.

According to data, total 1.9 billion women are in the reproductive age group worldwide. Among these 1.1 billion women have a need for family planning, but only 84 million women are using contraceptive methods. Around 270 million women still have an unmet need for contraception.<sup>2,3</sup>

Consistent efforts need to be made to educate not just the end users but also the service providers in every aspect surrounding a newly introduced method so that their capacities are strengthened. The users will also benefit from the strengthening of service providers; they will have better, more accurate access to information surrounding various contraceptive options, enabling them to make more informed choices. The third and equally important partner is the media. Greater efforts need to be made by both the government and civil society organizations to educate media to promote unbiased reporting and avoid creating panic on introduction of new methods.

As per NFHS-4 data, the two methods of contraception available to men - vasectomy and condoms - cumulatively account for about 12 per cent of the overall contraceptive practices suggesting that women are the building block of the family planning pillar in India.<sup>4</sup> It has also been found out through a study that 40.2 per cent men think it is a woman's responsibility to avoid getting pregnant.<sup>5</sup> Interpersonal/spousal communication has a great prospective to significantly improve family planning use and continuation.

With all these preliminary data on the status of family planning in the world and India in particular, we decided to assess the knowledge and practices about Family Planning among women attending the Obstetrics Outpatient department of a newly established tertiary care center.

## METHODS

The Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology planned to open a family planning clinic for reaching the unmet needs of the people in the newly developed tertiary care center. But before starting the special clinic, we wanted to have a thorough understanding of the levels of awareness and acceptance of various family planning methods among the women attending the outpatient department of this tertiary care hospital. This preliminary data would be helpful in planning suitable programs which would be helpful in enhancing the family planning acceptance and modifying the existing steps of approach.

A cross-sectional descriptive study was done in the department of Obstetrics and Gynecology of the tertiary care hospital. The study group included 200 women within the reproductive (18-45 years) age group. Informed consent was taken from all the participants. The women who were below or above the age cut off and women who did not give consent for participation, women who were pregnant or lactating or infertile were excluded from the study. Data were collected through a preformed questionnaire by interview method. The questionnaire was based on the type of contraceptive practices, socio – economic information, demographic data, and participant’s awareness regarding various contraceptive methods, current method of contraception being used, and the reason for not using any contraceptive method. The

data collected was analyzed using the Statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 22 software.

## RESULTS

The cross sectional study was undertaken from 30th August 2021 to 25th September 2021 in the Obstetrics and Gynecology outdoor of the hospital. A total of 200 participants were included in the study. The data was collected from all the 200 participants, compiled and analyzed.

**Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics of the study population.**

Variables	Frequency	Percentage	
Age	18-24	89	44.5
	25-34	98	49
	35-44	13	6.5
Residence	Rural	124	62
	Urban	76	38
Education level	Illiterate	22	11
	Primary education	104	52
	Secondary education	62	31
	Graduation	8	4
	Post-graduation	4	2
Socio-economic status	Low	82	41
	Middle	104	52
	High	14	7
Religion	Hindu	116	58
	Muslim	62	31
	Others	22	11
BMI	Normal	134	67
	Under-weight	42	21
	Over-weight	24	12
Parity	Nulliparous	66	33
	1-2	94	47
	3-4	36	18
	Above 4	4	2

Table 1 depicts the socio-demographic variables of the study population. Majority of the study participants were within 18-34 years of age (93.5%). More than half of the participants were from rural background (62%). Majority of the women belonged to middle income group (52%) and only 11% of the study population were illiterate. 47% of the women had one or two children at the time of interview.

Table 2 depicts the knowledge of the participants regarding the different available methods of contraception. 88% of the participants were aware of some or the other methods of contraception. According to the participants,

the main source of information was health care workers, friends, family members (mother and sisters) and various social platforms and television. (Table 3)

**Table 2: Knowledge of participants about various contraceptive methods.**

Parameter	Number	Percentage (%)
Aware	176	88
unaware	24	12
Condom	188	94
Oral contraceptive pills	183	91.5
Intra uterine contraceptive devices	160	80
Dmpa/ injectables	97	48.5
Sterilisation	179	89.5
Calender method	142	71
Coitus interruptus	179	89.5

**Table 3: Source of knowledge.**

Source	Number	Percentage (%)
Health care workers	55	27.5
Friends	16	8
Relatives	32	16
Social platforms and television	97	48.5

**Table 4: Current contraception use.**

Parameter	Number	Percentage (%)
No method	74	37
Condom	33	16.5
Contraceptive pills	6	3
IUCD	2	1
DMPA/Injectables	0	0
Sterilization	18	9
Calendar method	0	0
Coitus interruptus	65	32.5
Abstinence	2	1

In table 4, the current contraception used by the study participants is depicted.37% of women were not using any method despite being aware of contraceptive methods. Maximum women (65) were following coitus interruptus as a natural method of contraception.16.5% of women were using barrier method of contraception.

Table 5 shows the reasons behind not using any contraceptive method. Unawareness about contraceptive methods was the major reason behind not using any method of contraception. Concern about side effects due to contraceptive methods was found among 16.2% of the non-users.

**Table 5: Reasons for non-use of any contraceptive method.**

Parameter	Number	Percentage
Unaware	24	32.4
Wants conception	14	18.9
Afraid of side effects	12	16.2
Unwilling husband	7	9.5
Unable to get	6	8.1
Husband doesn't stay together	11	14.9

## DISCUSSION

The family planning and welfare programme was started by independent India way back in 1950's. But due the social constraints and diversity in Indian population, there is lack of awareness and acceptance of various family planning methods among the Indian population. This problem is even worse in the remote areas and less developed states of India. So it becomes necessary to educate the people regarding the family planning programs and to tackle the needs of different sections of Indian population.

Developing countries like India can improve the overall socio-economic standards of the society and reap high returns on investments for the country's growth by investing in family planning. Previous survey data shows that adequate attention to family planning in countries with high population can not only reduce poverty and hunger but also prevent maternal mortality and childhood deaths.<sup>6</sup>

The Government of India introduced injectable contraceptives, centchroman and progestin only pills in 2015.<sup>7</sup> This was a major change which marked the shift from terminal methods of female sterilization to more modern, temporary and effective methods of contraception.<sup>8</sup>

In the present study, a total of 200 women participated. 93.5% women belonged to age group of 18-34 years. The age group characteristics are similar to the study conducted by Renjhen et al in Sikkim.<sup>9</sup> For using the right method of contraception in the correct manner, female literacy and knowledge is utmost important. In the present study 11% of the study population was illiterate. Maximum women had primary education (52%). Awareness level among the study population was 88% which is similar to study done by Pegu et al.<sup>10</sup> Some studies have shown lower level of awareness among the women like study done by Kaur et al where awareness level was only 55%.<sup>11</sup> This variation in the awareness level in the different studies may be due to various factors like the different literacy rates of the study population, rural or urban background, family values and local customs and age old beliefs pertaining to that area of the study.

The major source of knowledge about different contraceptive methods was various social platforms and media (48.5%). Health workers also play a pivot role in

creating awareness about family planning methods and advantages of small family. In the present study, about 27.5 % women reported their source of knowledge as the health care workers. Similar results were shown by Sultan et al where media was found out to be the major source of knowledge.<sup>12</sup> A study done by Gomal et al showed that friends and relatives were the major source of information, but in our study friends and relatives contributed to only 32% of the source of knowledge.<sup>13</sup>

37% of the study population was not using any method of contraception at the time of the study. The major reason for this was unawareness about the family planning methods. Constant efforts by the government to make the people more aware about the family planning methods and their advantages are necessary.

The natural method of contraception, mainly coitus interruptus was mostly used by the study population (32.5%). But this method has a high rate of failure and also may lead to psychological disturbances in the male partners. The second most common method was barrier method, which accounted for 16.5%. The couples need to be taught about the most effective methods of contraception having less failure rates and most importantly lesser side effects. It is important to counsel both the partners about family planning as 9.5% women reported opposition from husband as a reason for not using any contraceptive methods.

Though knowledge about contraception was reported by 88% of the study population, only 63 % of them were actually using some method of contraception. This mismatch between knowledge and practice is also noted by some other studies.<sup>11,13</sup> To decrease this gap, the various family planning services should be widely available and the couples should be offered the basket of choices available and helped so that they can decide the best contraceptive method for themselves.

## CONCLUSION

The present study shows that there is a gap between the level of awareness about various family planning services and the actual practice of any method of contraception by the study population. So the main aim of starting of the family planning clinic at our institute would be to bridge this gap. The couples have to be motivated and helped in making the decision about the best suited contraceptive method with maximum benefits and minimum side effects and failure rates.

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