



KNOWLEDGE ATTITUDE AND PRACTICE OF EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION IN FEMALE COLLEGE STUDENTS IN EASTERN UTTAR PRADESH

Medical Science

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ABSTRACT

Unplanned pregnancy from casual sex, unplanned sexual activity, and sexual violence are increasing. Emergency Contraceptives (EC) are used to prevent unplanned pregnancies thereby preventing the occurrence and consequences of unplanned pregnancy. Emergency contraception is widely available in India and worldwide particularly in major cities. Yet the use of EC is very low and abortion rate is high in this part of the country compared to the national average leading to preventable morbidity and mortality.

KEYWORDS

EC (Emergency contraceptive), students, knowledge attitude, practice

INTRODUCTION

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), every 8 minutes a woman in a developing nation dies of complications arising from an unsafe abortion(1). The fifth United Nations Millennium Development Goal recommends a 75% reduction in maternal mortality by 2018. WHO deems unsafe abortion one of the easiest preventable causes of maternal mortality and a staggering public health issue. More than one-third of all pregnancies are unintended, and 1 in 5 ends in abortion(1). Emergency contraception (EC) can prevent up to over 95% of unplanned pregnancies when taken within 3-5 days after intercourse. EC can be used in the following situations: unprotected intercourse, concerns about possible contraceptive failure, incorrect use of contraceptives, and sexual assault .In India, emergency contraceptive pills are available over the counter but still the rate of teenage and unwanted pregnancy is very high due to its limited knowledge of methods of contraception and its use considered to be social taboo. This study has been conducted in female college students of a medical college and nursing college in eastern Uttar Pradesh where respondents were expected to be knowledgeable with a positive attitude towards EC. Therefore study was done with the following objectives:(1)To study the knowledge, assess attitude, and practice of emergency contraception if need be in female college students .(2)To study the relationship between socio-demographic factors and knowledge and attitude towards emergency contraception..

Material and Methods

A Descriptive observational community based study was taken up with two different groups of students. Group 1 were students from medical college (n=150) and the second group was students from nursing college (n=160) in Eastern Uttar Pradesh. After getting ethical clearance from the authority and verbal consent from the students, the questionnaire based on questions advised by WHO was given having duly explained .Parameters studied were socio-demographic profile of the students and their Knowledge, Attitude and Practice towards Emergency Contraception. A scoring system was adopted where by all the students were scored from 1 to 5 based on their reply to the questionnaire and were assessed against the mean value which was 3 for knowledge. Similarly a score of 1 to 6 was given for attitude with the mean value being 3.5.

Results

Socio – Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Total 310 female students were included in the study .Mean age of MBBS female students was 20.4yr and that of female Nursing student was 20.5yr. The students of Hindu religion were 89.3% MBBS students and 96.9% Nursing students.92% of MBBS students were from urban area and 8% belonged to rural area. Among Nursing students 41.3% were of urban area and 58.8% belonged to rural area. Two students studying MBBS were married and 36 out of 160 nursing students were married (Table 1).92% of MBBS students and 43.8% of nursing students had heard of emergency contraception. Most common source of information was Television (44.5%) followed by Newspaper (7.7%).

Knowledge on EC among Women who Seek Induced Abortion

In all 72.3% of MBBS students and 29.4% of Nursing students knew the correct time to take EC Pill, 42% of MBBS students and 21.5% of Nursing students knew the correct dose of EC pill whereas 58% of MBBS students and 77.5% of Nursing students didn't know the dose of EC. Respondents based on their reply to questionnaire were given score of 1 to 5 for knowledge with the mean value being 3. 127 MBBS students out of 150 and 152 students out of 160 scored less than the mean value thereby indicating that 84.7% of MBBS students and 95% nursing students had poor knowledge of EC (Table 4).

Attitude towards Emergency Contraception

On assessing the attitude 83.3% of MBBS students were willing to use EC whereas only 33.3% of Nursing students were willing to use EC in case of unprotected intercourse in future.30% of MBBS students and 37.5% of Nursing students felt use of EC will increase spread of HIV/AIDS in society. 22.7% of MBBS students and 46.9% of Nursing students felt use of EC will increase promiscuity. 32% of MBBS students and 42.5% of Nursing students, EC was thought to be a form of abortion.20% of MBBS students 47.5% of Nursing students were unwilling to use EC due to fear of side-effects. According to 16.7% of MBBS students and 41.3% of Nursing students use of EC was thought to have negative effect on the use of regular methods of contraception. Respondents based on their reply to questionnaire were given score of 1 to 6 for attitude with the mean value being 3.5.62 MBBS students out of 150 and 34 students out of 160 scored more than the mean value thereby indicating that 41.3% of MBBS students and only 21.2% of nursing students had positive attitude towards use of EC. 78.8% of nursing students reflected a negative attitude and reluctance to use EC (Table 4).

Practice of Emergency Contraception

Out of 208 students 38 were married (12.3%) and only 4 (1.9%) had actually used it.

Table 1- SOCIAL AND DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

CHARACTERISTICS	MBBS STUDENTS (%)	NURSING STUDENTS (%)
AGE		
15-19yr	34	66
20-24yr	114	79
25-30yr	2	15
RELIGION		
HINDU	134(89.3%)	155(96.9%)
MUSLIM	9(6%)	4(2.5%)
CHRISTIAN	6(4%)	1(0.7%)
BUDDHIST	1(0.7%)	0
AREA OF ORIGIN		
URBAN	138(92%)	66(41.3%)
RURAL	12(8%)	94(58.7%)
MARITAL STATUS		
UNMARRIED	2(1.3%)	36(22.5%)
MARRIED	148(98.7%)	124(77.5%)

KNOWLEDGE QUESTION	NUMBER		PERCENT(%)	
	MBBS	NURSING	MBBS	NURSING
EVER HEARD OF EC	138	70	92	43.8
SOURCE OF INFORMATION				
TV	87	51	58	31.9
NEWSPAPER	22	2	14.7	1.3
RADIO	2	3	1.3	1.9
FRIENDS	21	1	14	0.625
SPOUSE/RELATIVES	00	4	0	2.5
DOCTOR/HEALTH PERSONNEL	6	9	4	5.6
RECOMMENDED TIME TO TAKE EC(WITHIN HOW MANY HR OF UNPROTECTED INTERCOUSE)				
WITHIN 24HR	24	37		
WITHIN 48HR	14	1		
WITHIN 72HR	94	47	62.3	29.4
I DON'T KNOW	18	75	12	46.9
RECOMMENDED NO.OF DOSES				
1 TABLET	63	36	42	22.5
2 TABLET	9	6	6	3.8
>2 TABLET	2	2	1.3	1.3
I DON'T KNOW	76	116	50.7	72.5
Is EC available OTC				
YES	49	20	32.7	12.5
NO	96	131	64	81.9
I DON'T KNOW	5	9	3.3	5.6

Opinions	Agree		Neutral		Disagree	
	MBBS	Nursing	MBBS	Nursing	MBBS	Nursing
If I have unintended sexual intercourse, I would use ECs.	125(83.3%)	50(31.3%)	5(3.3%)	8(5%)	20(13.3%)	102(63.8%)
If a close friend or relative have unintended sexual intercourse I would advice her to use ECs.	122(81.3%)	79(49.4%)	2(1.3%)	4(2.5%)	26(17.3%)	77(48.1%)
Wide spread use of ECs will increase the prevalence of HIV/ AIDS and other STIs.	45(30%)	60(37.5%)	5(3.3%)	14(8.8%)	100(66.7)	86(53.8%)
Emergency contraception promotes promiscuity	34(22.7%)	75(46.9%)	21(14%)	11(6.9%)	97(64.7%)	74(46.3%)
Emergency contraception is one way of abortion	48(32%)	68(42.5%)	12(8%)	3(1.9%)	90(60%)	89(55.6%)
I don't want to use ECs for fear of side effects	30(20%)	76(47.5%)	6(4%)	5(3.1%)	114(76%)	79(49.4%)
Emergency contraception will affect ongoing regular methods of contraception negatively	25(16.7%)	66(41.3%)	4(2.5%)	6(3.8%)	121(80.7%)	88(55%)

TABLE 4 KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDE SCORE TOWARDS EC.

SCORE	KNOWLEDGE Mean=3		ATTITUDE Mean=2.5	
	MBBS	NURSING	MBBS	NURSING
0	4	37	20	23
1	24	61	16	34
2	48	34	30	40
3	51	20	22	29
4	15	8	25	18
5	8	0	30	12
6	-	-	7	4
TOTAL (n=310)	150	160	150	160

DISCUSSION

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), every 8 minutes a woman in a developing nation dies of complications arising from an unsafe abortion (1). More than one-third of all pregnancies are unintended, and 1 in 5 ends in abortion(1). Emergency contraception (EC) can prevent up to over 95% of unplanned pregnancies when taken within 3-5 days after intercourse.

Therefore this study was done in respondents who are associated with profession of healthcare and were expected to have above average knowledge of contraception and thereby get an assessment of knowledge children of this age group would have in society. The objectives were (1) To study the knowledge, assess attitude, and find out how many had practiced use of emergency contraception .(2)To study the relationship between socio-demographic factors and knowledge and attitude towards emergency contraception..

In the present study there were two group of respondents. One was studying MBBS and the other was studying graduation in Nursing .Majority of MBBS students (92%) belonged to Urban area as

compared to Nursing students ,58.7% of whom belonged to Rural areas. It was seen that 92% of MBBS students had heard of EC whereas only 43.8% of Nursing students had heard of EC, but only 15.3% of MBBS students and 5 % of Nursing students had correct and proper knowledge of EC. Respondents based on their reply to questionnaire scored less than the mean value thereby indicating that 84.7% of MBBS students and 95% nursing students had poor knowledge of EC (Table 4).). The lack of correct knowledge about EC suggests lack of sex education and educational programmes and their promotion.

In a study done by Pankaj et al,61.7% of female college students from rural area had heard of EC(2) where as in a study done by Fatuma A Ahmed et al., showed 84.2% of female MBBS students knew about EC(3). Rahman et al in their study among Nursing staff showed 84% knew about EC but only 28% had correct knowledge about it.(4). In the study done by Wendwosen T. Nibabe in africa, 53.3% of female college students had knowledge about EC method (5).

This difference of knowledge among MBBS and Nursing students can be explained as majority of MBBS students belonged to Urban area with more exposure to electronic media. It also reflects on intelligence level of those students compared to nursing students and also the teaching curriculum of MBBS students which is more comprehensive and provides more knowledge about various contraceptive methods.

The most common source of information of EC was TV (44.5%).The study done by Pankaj et al also showed TV as the major source (87.2%).The study done by Nasir Tajure et al showed Friends (36.5%) and Radio(22.8%) as major source of information(6).

In our study, 83.3% of MBBS students said they will use EC pill in case of unprotected intercourse in future whereas only 13.3% of Nursing students were willing to use. 41.3% of MBBS students and only 21.2% of nursing students had positive attitude towards use of EC. 78.8% of nursing students reflected a negative attitude and reluctance to use EC

(Table 4) there by again reflecting on their lack of sex education, and also as majority of them belonged to rural background who are comparatively more conservative and consider things like contraception a social taboo, they scored low on attitude front. Only 17.3% of nursing students were willing to advise their friends and relatives to use EC pill. This may be due to their misbeliefs that EC is a way of Abortion which is considered a social stigma and also that its use will lead to side-effects (Table 3).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion it was eye opening to find that educated students directly involved with healthcare had superficial knowledge of EC, had a mixed attitude towards practice of same (Table 4). The great potential of emergency contraceptives to prevent unintended pregnancies and induced abortions was not considered as an option by the majority of the study participants. The use of EC is very low. The major reason for this is lack of adequate knowledge on the method and sex education in general. This study showed that information on EC is not adequately disseminated by the health professionals working at the ground level. Hence, there is a need to educate the community, in particular women of reproductive age about ECs. Education on methods available, the correct time for use, and accurate message about its effect on health through health professionals and mass media should be given. The health executives should give due attention to design strategies and strengthening the health education in all health facilities as well as high schools and colleges focusing on the availability and options of Emergency contraceptives.

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