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KAP ON USE OF CONTRACEPTIVES AMONG THE SOUTH INDIAN POPULATION

Physiology

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Contraception is the intentional use of artificial methods or techniques to avoid pregnancy as a consequence of sexual intercourse. Recently the use of contraceptives has been recognized as an important element in family planning in most of the developing countries [1-3]. Studies also show that proper spacing between children has a lot of advantages, since a high fertility rate has always been associated with underdevelopment in developing countries [4]. Birth spacing is identified by the World Health Organization (WHO) as one of the essential health interventions required to attain a safe motherhood [5]. **Aim:** To establish the level of Knowledge and Awareness that the South Indian population have on the use of contraceptives. **Materials and Method:** This questionnaire based study was conducted with a batch of 100 individuals. A survey assessing the awareness and knowledge they had on use of contraceptives was taken. The Questionnaire focused on questions like benefits of contraceptives, most convenient option, the individual's preference, etc. The collected data was analyzed and presented in statistics and the results obtained were discussed. **Results:** Almost 88% were aware of the different contraceptive methods but only 72% agreed that they were beneficial to the society and individual. Up to 64% felt that condoms were the most effective and convenient to use, while 14% preferred surgery, 9% oral pills and 5% opted for implants. Though 87% of the population knew about oral pills, only 36% knew what they were composed of. 81% were aware of surgical methods but only 14% preferred it due to various reasons. **Conclusion:** More than 80% of the South Indian population were aware of the uses and effects of different forms of contraceptives and more than 70% of the population agreed to the benefits of contraceptives for themselves as well as the society. However surgical methods and Oral pills are not as popular as condoms among the South Indian population.

KEYWORDS

Contraception, Child Spacing, Condoms, Oral pills, Implants and Surgery.

INTRODUCTION

Contraception or birth control prevents pregnancy as a result of sexual intercourse by interfering with its process like during ovulation, fertilization, and implantation. Different kinds of contraceptives target different points in this process. Contraception has two main goals. It prevents unwanted pregnancies and also prevents spread of sexually transmitted infections (STIs). For example, Barrier methods when combined with spermicides can cause significant reduction in risk of STDs [6]. Women from low or middle class in developing countries are always more likely to die due to pregnancy and unsafe abortion or related complications when compared to women from the developed countries [7]. Use of contraceptives has witnessed a great reduction in maternal mortality rate upto 40% in developing countries during the last two decades [8]. Use of Contraceptives also increases the length of inter-pregnancy intervals and finally improves child survival and maternal health overall. A proper management of desired fertility can show significant improvement in household resources and family welfare [9].

There are various types of contraception available, but not all of them are appropriate for all types of situations. The best method of birth control depends on the individual's health, sexual activity, sexual partners, desire to have children later and family history of diseases [10]. Contraception is divided into four main categories: Barrier methods, Hormonal methods, Natural birth control and Sterilization [11].

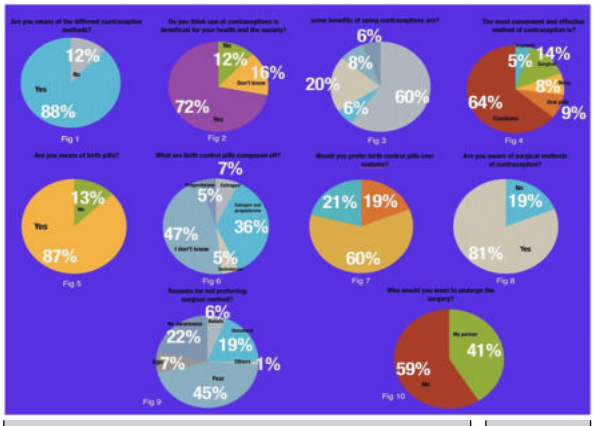
Barrier methods are designed to stop the sperms from entering the uterus. They are temporary and removable and serve to be the best option for women who do not prefer hormonal methods and who only wish to avoid pregnancy temporarily. The failure rates of barrier methods differ according to the method [12]. Hormonal methods for birth control utilize hormones to regulate and stop ovulation. Ovulation is the process in which an egg from the ovary is released and made available for fertilization. Thus stopping ovulation prevents pregnancy. These Hormones are introduced into the body through different methods like pills, injections, skin patches, implants, etc. They can be classified as short acting and long acting hormonal contraceptives [13-15]. Sterilization is a final resort, it is a permanent form of contraception that prevents a woman from conceiving and prevents a man from releasing the produced sperms. It is an irreversible procedure. In India, in order to maintain the demographic numbers, terminal surgical methods are stressed upon. It is mostly applicable to women who are done bearing children. Sterilization procedure especially of females is preferred over other modern methods for permanent contraception [16–19].

Before the introduction and spread of artificial contraceptive methods, Traditional methods were widely used. Some of them were coitus interruptus, Lactational amenorrhea, and Rhythm method. The use of traditional contraceptive methods however has shown a high failure rate, it lacks protection from sexually transmitted diseases etc. So the use of traditional methods has seen a gradual decrease in recent years with more people opting for other methods especially the barrier methods in case of India [20]. However it should be noted that no method of contraception can give 100% guarantee to avoid pregnancy as a consequence of sexual intercourse.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

It was a questionnaire based study conducted with a batch 100 individuals from the South Indian population. It was taken to assess the knowledge and awareness they had on use and effects of contraceptives. The questionnaire prepared for the survey consisted of a total of 12 questions focusing on details like awareness on different types of contraception, Opinions on use of contraceptives, benefits of their use, knowledge on pills and its composition, most preferred type of contraception, etc. The information for each question collected through the survey was then analyzed and presented in statistics. The results were then discussed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION



The present study revealed that more than 50% of contraceptive users were from the age range of 18 to 25 years. The percentage reduced to 33% in the age group of 26 to 35 years and only 11% of the individuals aged above 35 years used contraceptives. Data collected by YouGov India from a batch of 1,030 individuals in India aged above 18, states that out of the 61% of people from all age groups that use contraception, more than one third of them happened to be between the age group of 18-29 years. This can be because in most cases in India, the people don't feel the need to use contraceptives after getting married.

About 88% of the people were aware of the different contraceptive methods available (fig 1). A study conducted on Awareness and practices of contraceptive use among university students in Botswana concluded that about 80.8% of the students were aware of the different contraceptive methods [21]. However only 72% of them believed that use of contraception was beneficial to them and the society. While 12% thought otherwise (fig 2). This can be due to the fact that improper use of contraceptives can cause problems like irregular menstrual periods, depression, weight gain and some other health conditions.

Almost 60% of the individuals however agreed that they have numerous advantages like preventing unwanted pregnancies, regulating birth control, preventing sexually transmitted diseases and so on (fig 3). A study conducted by the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists in Washington stated that about 42% of women thought using oral contraceptives had other benefits than just preventing pregnancy but an equal proportion felt there were no health benefits [22].

When asked about the most effective and convenient method of contraception, 64% said condoms, 9% said oral pills, 5% preferred implants and 14% said surgery (fig 4). According to a study conducted in MVJ Medical College & Research Hospital, Obstetrics and Gynecology; 35.5 % used the barrier method, 18.31% opted for intrauterine devices, 26% used oral pills, 24.7% had resorted to sterilization and about 1.5% used other methods.

About 87% knew of birth control pills but only 36% correctly knew what they were composed of (fig 5,6). A quantitative survey taken by Kaduna Polytechnic Clinic in Tudun Wada,Nigeria showed that only 14.6% opted for oral pills. While 75% of them felt they were safe the rest 25% felt otherwise. People were mostly aware of the component progesterone. Only 13.6% knew of the combined pills with estrogen and progesterone. Few people had a misconception that oral pills would cause future infertility. Among the other side effects that people associated with oral pills were 30.5% Weight gain, 34.5% Irregular menstrual cycle, 11% Nausea and headache and 15.9% Mood swings. There have been studies proving and disproving the occurrence of cancer in women as well [23]. Almost 60% of the people said they would opt for condoms over oral pills, 19% said they preferred oral pills over condoms, While 21% stated that they would go for both together for extra measures (fig 7).

Approximately 81% of the people were aware of surgical methods of contraception (fig 8), but only 14% preferred surgical methods (fig 4). Another study done by A.J. Institute of Medical Sciences, Karnataka shows that 77.3% of women knew of birth control and family planning services and 64.3% out of them had knowledge about the permanent contraceptive method of sterilization. When asked for some of the common reasons for people not preferring surgical methods, the results were; 45% agreed that it was out of fear, 7% said it went against their ego, 22% felt it was due to lack of awareness, 19% believed it was unnatural and 6% claimed that it was against their religious beliefs (fig 9). A review done in Hanover Medical School, Germany stated that 23.2% believed it was a conflict with belief and religion. Out of them 9.7% felt sterilization was against their faith, whereas 13.5% thought it was in conflict with their religion.

Finally when asked who should undergo the surgery, 59% said they would undergo the surgery themselves, while 41% wanted their partner to go through it (fig 10). The same study by A.J. Institute of Medical Science stated that 73% of the people preferred to undergo tubectomy, while only 13.7% were ready for vasectomy. The main reason (25.9%) for refusing to undergo the surgery was fear. About 32.6% of women wished for their husbands to undergo surgery. One of the main reasons given by women for refusing tubectomy was the desire for more children. However in India the permanent method of sterilization is always forced onto the women rather than the men, because of traditional notions and because of lack of decision making power [24].

Legends

Fig 1: The pie chart depicts the frequency distribution of awareness on use of contraceptives among the population. Blue depicts those who were aware and grey depicts those who were not. About 88% of the population were aware of the use of contraceptives.

Fig 2: The pie chart depicts the frequency distribution of the population that believed the use of contraceptives was beneficial to the person and society and those who did not. Purple depicts those who believed they were beneficial, green depicts those who did not and Yellow depicts those who did not have much awareness about it. About 72% of the population thought they were beneficial to the individual and the society.

Fig 3: The pie chart depicts the frequency distribution of the benefits of using contraceptives among the population. Dark blue depicts avoiding STDs, cream depicts birth control, blue depicts avoiding unwanted pregnancies, grey depicts all of the above and sky blue depicts those who did not have much awareness about it. About 60% of the population were aware of the multiple benefits of using contraceptives and only 6% had no knowledge about it.

Fig 4: The pie chart depicts the frequency distribution of the most effective or convenient method of using contraceptives as believed by the population. Red depicts condoms, orange depicts birth pills, blue depicts implants and injections, green depicts all surgical methods and Yellow depicts those who did not have much awareness about it. About 64% of the population believed condoms to be the most convenient and effective method.

Fig 5: The pie chart depicts the frequency distribution of awareness on birth pills. Yellow depicts those who were aware and green depicts those who did not have much awareness about it. About 87% of the population were aware.

Fig 6: The pie chart depicts the frequency distribution of awareness on the composition of birth pills. Light blue depicts estrogen and progesterone, which is the right answer. Only 36% of the population is aware of the correct composition of birth pills.

Fig 7: The pie chart depicts the frequency distribution of preference between birth pills and condoms. Yellow depicts those who prefer condoms, orange depicts those who prefer pills and blue depicts those who prefer to use both.

Fig 8: The pie chart depicts the frequency distribution of awareness on surgical methods of contraception. Grey depicts those who were aware and blue depicts those who did not have much awareness about it. About 81 % of the population were aware.

Fig 9: The pie chart depicts the frequency distribution of reasons for not preferring surgical methods. Pastel blue depicts fear, sky blue depicts unnatural, greyish-blue depicts no awareness. The most common reason was fear.

Fig 10: The pie chart depicts the frequency distribution of who they wanted to undergo the surgery. Red depicts themselves and green depicts their partners.

CONCLUSION

More than 80% of the South Indian population is aware of the different methods and effects of contraception. However the hormonal methods and surgical methods of contraception are not as popular as barrier methods among them. More awareness needs to be made regarding the uses and effects of Oral birth pills. Women should be made aware of the option of Vasectomy along with Tubectomy under the surgical methods of contraception. Apart from sterilization, Awareness on use of long term reversible options like Intra-uterine devices (copper T), etc. must also be made among the South Indian population.

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